CONSTANCE:

A NOVEL.

THE FIRST LITERARY ATTEMPT OF

A YOUNG LADY.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

——————— ON MY STRAIN
PERHAPS SOME COLD FASTIDIOUS JUDGE
CASTS A DISDAINFUL EYE, AND CALLS MY TOIL,
AND CALLS THE LOVE AND BEAUTY WHICH I SING
THE DREAM OF FOLLY. AKENSIDE.

VOLUME III.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

CONSTANCE.

CHAP. I.

DEPENDANCE.

A FEW minutes before three, she went down to the parlour, and found Mr. Carwell reading: he rose, she apologized for interrupting him, and was going out of the room again, but he said he was only reading for amusement, and should be glad of her company: dinner was sent in, and, before it concluded, the strangers were pretty well acquainted.

When the cloth was removed, and she would have retired, Mr Carwell asked her if her engagements called her away immediately. On her answering that she was not in a hurry, he said—then, Madam, you would do me a particular favour if you would, by staying, suffer me to enjoy a pleasure, hitherto denied me in this house, that of rational conversation; for I assure you, you are almost

the only rational being I have ſat down with here ſince I became a member of Lord George's family.

The oddity of this ſpeech attracted Conſtance's attention, and as her head was dreſſed, and ſhe had nothing to attach her to one place more than to another, ſhe returned to her ſeat. She had, before dinner, mentioned the ſuddenneſs of her acquaintance with Lady George Brenville; and gratitude for her kindneſs, made her ſpeak highly of her generoſity to her. Mr. Carwell now reſumed the ſubject, and ſaid her Ladyſhip could not but be very happy in ſuch a companion, if ſhe had leiſure to enjoy or reflect on the advantage.—I wiſh, returned Conſtance, that it were in my power to make any acknowledgment for her favours: I thought I had this morning found out a means of expreſſing my ſenſe of the obligations I am under to her; but I was diſappointed. She then related her viſit to the nurſery, and the oppoſition her endeavours had met with.—It will, indeed, ſaid Mr. Carwell, be more than an Herculean labour to communicate inſtruction to children hitherto ſo ill managed.—This taſk is reſerved for me, and it is growing every day more difficult; for Lady George proteſts againſt teaching the boys any thing till they are ſeven years old; *then* ſhe thinks *talking* to them will do; they will be *capable of underſtanding reaſon*; *now* ſhe is convinced all pains would be thrown away; beſides, ſhe cannot bear to hear children crying, and to ſee them with red eyes. As for the girls, he

continued,

continued, they were, I hoped in a better train; a very ingenious and deſerving woman, was recommended to educate them, and engaged for the purpoſe: ſhe was told when ſhe came, that ſhe was to teach Miſs Brenville to ſpeak French, that ſhe was not to uſe ſeverity; but to let her learn when ſhe would. In a few days it was evident, that no perſuaſion would induce Miſs Brenville to the ſmalleſt degree of application. The young woman, meaning to diſcharge the duty ſhe had undertaken, in order to make her read, one day confined her by the cruel method of pinning her to her knee, imagining that the loſs of liberty would ſoon prevail on her; but ſhe did not know the Brenville ſpirit: Miſs, enraged at her impriſonment, broke from it, and with her frock torn, ran to Lady George, who condoled with her, and ſeverely reprimanded her governeſs. The miſeries of dependance obliged her to excuſe her conduct: ſhe ſaid ſhe underſtood ſhe was to teach Miſs Brenville French, and therefore wiſhed her to read a very ſmall portion of the grammar; ſhe was anſwered, that what was meant by teaching Miſs Brenville French, was, that ſhe ſhould ſpeak it to her:—how was a child of ſix years old to underſtand grammar? Out of reſpect to her recommendation, ſhe was not diſmiſſed, but deſired to remember ſhe was to uſe no ſeverity. She had been in the family about two months, when my Lady was told the governeſs ſhe had provided for her daughter, was

very unfit for the employment, for that Miſs Brenville underſtood not a word of French. and could not read Engliſh. Mademoiſelle was called, and interrogated on the ſubject of her pupil's deficiency: ſhe pleaded the impracticability of teaching, where all correction, even the moſt gentle, was prohibited, and where the uſe of books was denied; but ſhe was informed, that the beſt method of teaching French, was by ſpeaking it to the ſcholar, as that communicated a habit of converſing in it fluently: ſhe urged, that it was impoſſible to converſe with a perſon in a language they had not been previouſly taught; that Miſs Brenville would not pay the leaſt attention to her, nor was ſhe to be won by any incentives.—The argument was concluded by the young woman's diſcharge; and Lady George means, at the *firſt leiſure opportunity*, to teach her daughter herſelf.

I wonder, ſaid Conſtance, that my Lord does not interfere in this very eſſential point.—*He*, interfere? returned Mr. Carwell; it is a ſign, that you are a ſtranger in this houſe.—I am, indeed, ſhe replied; and if you would give me any information that would ſpare me the difficult labour of developing characters, I ſhould think myſelf obliged to you: but, continued ſhe, I believe I muſt defer this to another opportunity; Lady George is come home to dreſs, and perhaps it may be expected I ſhould wait on her. Is there any probability of your return ſoon, Madam? ſaid Mr. Carwell

I

If you are quite at leiſure, ſhe anſwered, when her Ladyſhip is gone out, which will, I ſuppoſe, be in an hour and a half, I will trouble you again. —Mr. Carwell ſaid, he was wholly unengaged, that he would expect her, and would be where ſhe left him; and ſhe then went to Lady George, who was dreſſing, with all poſſible expedition.

A long viſit ſhe found unneceſſary, and therefore, that ſhe might not be obliged again to leave Mr. Carwell, ſhe finiſhed her own dreſs, and ſoon after received a meſſage from her Ladyſhip, deſiring to ſee her.—My dear, ſaid Lady George, when ſhe entered the room, you are very notable, to be ſo complete already—you look beautifully.—Upon my honour it is enough to make one in love with bombazine and crape, to ſee you look ſo well.—I wanted to tell you the coach will call you rather before eight, and to deſire you to take care I am told when it comes to me, as I ſhould be very ſorry to make you wait.—Conſtance thanked her Ladyſhip for her politeneſs, and would have left her, but ſhe begged her to ſtay, that ſhe might have her opinion of her cloaths: the anxiety and exceſſive pains beſtowed on the important ſubject of decoration, always diſguſted Miſs Fitzarthur; and when ſhe ſaw how far, that ſhe was now a witneſs to, ſurpaſſed all ſhe had before conceived of it, ſhe congratulated herſelf, that as her dreſs admitted of no variety, and ſtood in need of no taſte, ſhe was freed from all mental exertions reſpecting it. Lady George was

moſt magnificently taudry, and in ſuch a blaze of finery, as increaſed Conſtance's ſatisfaction at being exempted from competition; for ſhe could not but imagine, that had ſhe not worn mourning, and been dreſſed in ſuch a ſtile as ſhe ſhould have thought proper for the occaſion, her Ladyſhip, if ſhe approved her own appearance, muſt have thought herſelf diſgraced by her companion.—Well, my dear, ſaid Lady George, when her woman had put the finiſhing hand to her ornament, now tell me how I look: do I look decent?—I am ſure you have a good taſte in dreſs, though you are now debarred from ſhewing it.—I never ſtudied it ſufficiently, anſwered ſhe, to be an adept, but every one muſt own your's ſuperb.—And yet, returned Lady George, after all the pains and expence beſtowed on me, you eclipſe me.—It is true, ſaid Conſtance, ſmiling, when I ſtand between you and a ſpectator, for I then appear a black patch on you.—It is a moſt provoking thing, returned her Ladyſhip, in a tone of raillery, to be outdone by you. Why your hair looks as if it was only naturally curled; you diſdain powder, and your flaxen locks have nothing to relieve them but a bit of crape and a dingy feather. I ſhall certainly do you ſome miſchief out of envy, ſo take care of yourſelf.—Her good-humoured raillery was put an end to by the arrival of the carriage; and Conſtance taking her work, returned to the parlour, where ſhe found Mr. Carwell.

He

He received her with pleaſure; and having removed her apprehenſions, that ſhe inconveniently detained him, he ſaid,—I may venture to exerciſe towards you, Madam, a privilege with has been uſeleſs to me in this houſe, that of ſpeaking my ſentiments: a mind ſuch as your's is above taking any unfair advantage, and you ſhall profit by the experience I have dearly, very dearly bought; but you need not ſuch experience; you are not obliged as I am, to endure, without repining, all that is in the power of illiberality and ſuperiority to inflict: you may leave this houſe when its owners loſe their reſpect for you—you are not neceſſitated to bear contumely and indignity. The bleſſings of independance are a popular theme of declamation, but no one can paint its felicity without having been a witneſs to what I ſuffer. If you will bear me to be loquacious on the ſubject of my own misfortunes, I will ſhow you, Madam, what it is to be *a poor relation of a noble family.*

Conſtance profeſſed her readineſs to hear him, and he continued.—'My mother was the ſiſter of Lord George Brenville's father, and, by an imprudent marriage, offended her family, and relinquiſhed all expectations from them: my father was extravagant, and in a few years ſpent her fortune; he died, and left her diſtreſſed: her brother, hearing ſhe was a widow, and had me to maintain, wrote to her, to tell her that her ſtanding in need of aſſiſtance ſhould be a reaſon with him for forgetting

all animoſity, and to deſire I might be ſent to him, as he meant to be at the expence of educating me: I was, by his generoſity, ſent to ſchool with his ſons; and by the death of my mother, ſoon after, my uncle's houſe became my only home. My couſins conſidered me as a poor dependant, obliged to bear with all they choſe I ſhould ſuffer, and early initiated me into habits of obedience: if their commands could not be complied with, an excuſe was anſwered by a blow; for they knew I did not dare to complain of their ill-treatment. We were ſent together to college, and I now hoped, that as we were no longer boys, I ſhould lead a leſs irkſome life, and be allowed to follow my inclinations, which were directed to the acquiſition of knowledge; but I was deceived: other pleaſures were now their purſuit, and I was to be employed to procure them; my nature rebelled againſt becoming the miniſter to their exceſſes, yet I knew that ruin followed diſobedience. I had once gently hinted to my uncle, that my progreſs in learning was impeded by the attendance my couſins required of me; but he diſcouraged all complaints: told me I muſt be diligent, that it would do me no harm to learn to bear hardſhips, and that he could not ſuppoſe his ſons would be wanting in regard to me. Though my difficulty was now increaſed to a ſerious magnitude, and perhaps my next action was, that which would ſtamp a character on me, I could not reſolve to riſque my benefactor's diſpleaſure,

ſure, nor could I hope that the repreſentation of a needy orphan would be preferred to the excuſes of two favourite children.

'In this dilemma, I made our tutor, a very reſpectable man, acquainted with my diſtreſs: he did what he could to relieve me, by talking to the young men, but it was ineffectual; my maſters cared not what they did; and as the money which we were to have was to be remitted to them, and they were to pay me my portion of it, they knew the hold they had of me. We had been at Cambridge about a month, when vexation and the irregularity they obliged me to, injured my health, moſt fortunately for my emancipation; for this occaſion was improved by our tutor: he wrote to my uncle, informing him, of my illneſs, and adviſing my removal to Aberdeen, which, as it was my native air, might probably recover me. To ſpare me all anxiety, this good friend forbore communicating his propoſal to me till he was ſure of its ſucceſs; but when the approbation of his ſcheme arrived, and thoſe who drove me away heard of my intention, they vehemently proteſted againſt it: all I could ſay availed nothing; however on repreſenting to them, as the only thing that could move them, that I ſhould live at leſs expence in Scotland, the advantage of ſtopping half my ſhare of the money ſent with us, induced them to acquieſce, and they ſuffered me to depart. At Aberdeen I purſued my ſtudies uninterruptedly, and

thought, as in purſuance of my generous benefactor's wiſhes, who could provide for me in that way, I had declared for the church, all my difficulties were over.

'I am ſure, Madam, you can feel for the diſtreſſes even of a ſtranger. While I was at Aberdeen, hours of intenſe ſtudy and application were relieved by the friendly ſociety I met with. I became acquainted with a young woman, the daughter of a gentleman of good family, but whoſe means of living were not more than adequate to his neceſſities, and who had been ſingularly kind to me. A ſhort time convinced me, that much of my happineſs was derived from and dependant on her; her virtues were many, and I ſincerely loved and eſteemed her. I told her ſo; ſhe referred me to her father; he heard me with pleaſure, and promiſed his conſent to our marriage, provided I could get my uncle's approbation of it. I wrote to him on the ſubject, and received for anſwer, that in ſuch a buſineſs he ſhould not interfere, that he meant to provide for me, and that, while I behaved as I had, I might depend on his friendſhip; that he did not think he had even a right to conſent, but that if I aſked his opinion on the prudence of the meaſure, he would tell me he ſaw no objection to it. I now fancied all I wiſhed for within my reach; and, ſtimulated as well by gratitude as inclination, with much diligence endeavoured to qualify myſelf for the profeſſion I had choſen. I finiſhed my ſtudies,

we were married, and quitted Aberdeen to ſpend a a few weeks with a relation. There I received the blaſt of all my hopes—my uncle died ſuddenly, and left me wholly deſtitute.

'Had he bequeathed to his eldeſt ſon, with the ability to fulfill his intentions, his benevolence, my ſorrow for the loſs of ſo generous a friend, would have been mixed with ſelf-intereſted conſiderations; but I ſoon found, that a legacy of 100l. was all I had to truſt to. The young Duke had many who had better deſerved his favour to reward; and a letter I was forced to write to procure the payment of at leaſt a part of my legacy, in order to ſecure me from want, was petulantly anſwered by a remittance of the whole, with an intimation that all farther intercourſe was to ceaſe.

'This ſhock, which from my knowledge of the perſon whoſe hand communicated it, I ought to have expected, almoſt overſet me; it ſtruck at the root of every enjoyment I had promiſed myſelf, and left me without even the means of future ſubſiſtence.—I had little acquaintance with the world, none with that part of it that could be of ſervice to me; all my mother's relations, excepting this branch of them, had continued irreconcileable to her, and their reſentment ſurviving her, I had nothing to hope from them. To break this ſevere diſappointment to my wife, was a taſk to which I found myſelf very unequal; as it was however neceſſary, I told her father, who adviſed me to write to my

couſin, to repreſent the ſituation in which I was left, and to beg him to make good what his father had deſigned. That advice, which at any other time an unjuſtifiable pride would have forbidden my condeſcending to follow, other conſiderations induced me to liſten to. I wrote to the Duke, but he never anſwered my letter.

'We lived, with all the frugality we could practice, on the 100l. I had received; I was continually meditating on my misfortunes, and ſincerely wiſhing I had been bred to ſome trade, where by the labour of my hands I could have procured a maintenance. My dejection was viſible to all my friends; I was univerſally pitied, but no one could relieve me. Thoſe who had any intereſt with my family, exerted it by writing to the Duke, but all was ineffectual; he was not to be prevailed on; and I ſaw nothing before me but miſery, aggravated by the conſciouſneſs that it was as ſeverely felt by another. Unable to bear the idea of having rewarded benevolent hoſpitality by bringing diſtreſs home to my friend, and by ruining his daughter's peace, I reſolved to attempt ſomething; and, if it failed, to quit the country, in ſearch of any employment, however ſervile, that would ſubſiſt me. I flattered myſelf that Lord George Brenville had more humanity than his brother; and though I knew, and by that knowledge had been deterred from applying to him, that it was not in his power to provide for me as the Duke could, I thought he might, perhaps, be prevailed

vailed on to ſecure me from ſtarving. Raiſed a little by this hope, I communicated to my father-in-law and my wife an intention I had formed of writing to Lord George: this he approved; but ſhe fearing that I ſubjected myſelf to new inſults, oppoſed it, telling me ſhe truſted Providence would in ſome way or other protect us from want, and that ſhe had rather live on the ſmalleſt poſſible income, than be beholden to the grudging kindneſs of ſuch relations: I thought as ſhe did; yet, as I could not have acquitted myſelf of being acceſſary to my misfortunes, if I had not followed the preſent impulſe, I inquired for Lord George Brenville, and learnt that he was in London, and had juſt married a lady of very large fortune. This circumſtance was in my favour, and I was ſtill further encouraged by hearing, that he and the duke had quarrelled.

'I now thought that a ſpirit of oppoſition might ſupply the want of good will towards me, and taking advantage of the errors of others, I wrote to Lord George, ſtating as modeſtly as I could my expectations; that by following the line of education which his father had marked out for me, I was unfitted for getting my living by manual labour, and begging him, in order to ſave one of his family from ruin, to aſſiſt me with his intereſt to procure me ſome eſtabliſhment in the church; or if tha. was not to be done, to enable me to ſubſiſt where

then

then was, till I could meet with ſome employment.

'It was near three months, and my legacy was reduced more than half, before I received any anſwer. I had given up all hopes, and was preparing to meet my fate with fortitude, when I was ſuddenly rouſed by a letter from Lord George, in which, after blaming me ſeverely for chuſing a profeſſion that could not maintain me, and declaring that he had neither intereſt nor patronage, I was told that I might come up to London, and perhaps ſomething might be found out for me. Though I ſaw little in this to tempt me, I reſolved to do as directed, and quitting all that was valuable to me, I in a few days reached London, with my couſin's cold invitation, and a ſum ſhort of twenty pounds in my pocket.

'I waited on Lord George, who received me rather better than I had expected: he ſaid he would ſpeak to ſome of his friends to procure me occaſional employ, till ſomething permanent could be found for me; and ſeemed pleaſed at hearing, that an annual income of one hundred pounds would diſcharge his obligation to intereſt himſelf for me, and abundantly ſatisfy me. When I was about to quit him, he told me to be near him, and to call on him now and then: accordingly, I took a lodging in the neighbourhood, which though the cheapeſt I could get, was very diſproportionate to my finances, and in a fortnight, after having called on his lordſhip three times without ſeeing him, I

was

was obliged to write to him, to tell him I muſt ſeek for a leſs expenſive part of the town to live in: this was anſwered by a donation of a guinea, and an order to be with him the next morning at dreſſing time. I obeyed, and his vanity was gratified by exhibiting my dependance to his valet and his hair-dreſſer: he diſſuaded me from leaving my lodgings, and ſaid he would think what he could do; that he had ſo many applications he knew not which to attend to, but he would try if he could get me any thing, and I ſhould hear from him.

'A week elapſed, nothing was done; and I began again to deſpair: when accidentally meeting my Cambridge tutor in the ſtreet, I communicated to him my diſappointment, and begged his advice; this he very freely gave me, and directed my attention towards that, in which he imagined my couſin might eaſily aſſiſt me, the poſt of private tutor, if poſſible in a family of my own country. Happy to have it in my power to relieve Lord George of any part of his labour, by giving him a hint how he might get rid of me, I went to him, ſaw him, and told him what I had been adviſed to: but the propoſal did not meet his concurrence: he ſaid he could have obtained ſuch an employment fifty times for me, if he had liked the diſgrace of having it ſaid a relation of his was a *ſervant*; that it was not agreeable to him, and that if I would wait with patience he would certainly think of me, and I ſhould ſee what could be done. I promiſed to be

directed

directed by him; but hinted, that if ſomething was not ſhortly deviſed, the fear of being troubleſome to him would force me to accept an offer of the kind I had mentioned: he ſaid I muſt do as I would, for that he knew I was not to be perſuaded; that I might call on him the next week, and he would in the mean time ſpeak to ſomebody for me.

'In ſhort, madam, not to weary you with a minute detail, I dragged on three months in this miſerable way, depending on my unkind relation for my daily bread, and occaſionally earning a guinea by my pen: when, one night about twelve o'clock, I was called out of my bed to attend Lord George. I went to him immediately, and found his chariot waiting at his door, and him ready to go out; he met me in the hall, and telling me he was going to Ranelagh, and had not a minute to ſpare, but that he wanted to ſpeak with me, went into one of the rooms, and I followed him; he then informed me of his having that day determined on ſettling me, and in a way that he hoped would ſatisfy me. The ſcheme was this:—that I ſhould come into his houſe, under the denomination of his chaplain, an office which I have ſince found includes thoſe of his ſteward, bailiff, and ſecretary, and for this he offered me *thirty* pounds a year and my board. I deſired to be allowed till the morning to conſider of his propoſal, as it was not eaſy to reſolve inſtantly on becoming an exile from my country and connexions; but he inſiſted on my determining immediately,

immediately, at the ſame time telling me this was all he would or could do for me. To have rejected the offer, though it was far from meeting my wiſhes, as it tied me to a ſpot, and kept me entirely dependant, would in my ſituation, have been madneſs: I therefore conſented, and became a domeſtic of my couſin's, who ſeemed now to have forgotten either that I was, or that it was diſgraceful to be a *ſervant*.

'More than ſix years, madam, have I lived in a ſtate to which the moſt laborious toil would be relaxation; ſeparated from whatever is dear to me, a witneſs to exceſſive licentiouſneſs, and all that is to be abhorred in modern high life; and the object of contempt and ridicule. Lord George is a man of very ſlender endowments, hot-headed, and without ſtrength of mind to think for himſelf; he is open to every temptation that preſents itſelf under the title of pleaſure, and having no intellectual reſources, is perpetually looking abroad for variety. As his income originally was very ſmall, and as his marriage has placed him in a ſituation not often the lot of a younger brother, his dependants and needy companions are numerous and expenſive; he ſeems to feel peculiar pleaſure from aſſociating with thoſe over whom he has any pre-eminence, and a little well-timed adulation can ſecure his ſervices, or command his purſe. When I have ſaid this, I need not add, that his fortune is in the wane; ſo many live out of it, that it cannot laſt long, even with oeconomy;

oeconomy; but, notwithſtanding all his foibles, I am inclined to think, that had he been brought up with more reſtraint, and had care been taken in the ſelection of his company, he might have been at leaſt an innoxious member of ſociety. As for her ladyſhip, ſhe, though of a diſpoſition oppoſite to her huſband, ſo orders her conduct that it produces a ſimilar effect. She deteſts every thing beneath her, has a taſte for elegant expence of all kinds, is never ſo happy as in planning a *fête champetre*; and having a wonderful fertility of imagination, could conſume the revenue of a prince in the ornaments of a ball or maſquerade: her extravagance is boundleſs, her inclinations keep her conſtantly poor; and ſhe has taken as much pains to obliterate from her character all that made her reſpectable, as others would to acquire it: her conduct is leſs excuſable than her huſband's, as ſhe has a very fine underſtanding; an underſtanding that ought to point out to her the errors of her life; for I am ſorry to ſay, her heart is as much worſe than my lord's, as her head is better. And now, madam, giving me credit for the truth of what I have told you, and adding to it the ſpecimen you have had of the children's diſpoſitions, do you think I am miſtaken in ſaying, that a rational creature is a novelty to me?'

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

INEBRIETY.

A TEAR of ſenſibility gliſtened in Conſtance's eye at Mr. Carwell's relation of his ſufferings; ſhe wiſhed to have ſaid ſomething to him, but her feelings prevented her; he perceived, and was pleaſed with this evidence of a ſympathetic diſpoſition, when an end was put to their converſation, by the arrival of a gentleman on buſineſs to him, and ſhe retired to her room, reflecting on what ſhe had heard. She ſaw new difficulties and inconveniencies, and that ſhe muſt, if ſhe ſtaid with Lady George Brenville, either remain in ſolitude, and perhaps ſink into contempt, or plunge into an abyſs of folly and diſſipation; the firſt might be diſagreeable, the latter was imprudent, dangerous, and irrational. She therefore reſolved on availing herſelf of the excuſe of her yet recent illneſs, and to adhere to that path which ſhe thought leaſt hazardous: truſting to Lord Reycolm's returning in a ſhort time to England, and hoping that Lord George's family would ſoon quit London, ſhe flattered herſelf it would not be difficult to endure importunity, and even a relaxation of regard for that period. But that which gave her the moſt concern, was Mr. Carwell's intimation that her benefactreſs was leſs amiable than

than ſhe had thought her; this mortified and diſappointed her, as it diminiſhed the pleaſure ſhe expected from the retirement into the country, and forced her again to be on her guard. To a temper naturally unſuſpicious, nothing is more painful than rouſing diſtruſt; yet here confidence would have been ſupineneſs, and ſhe foreſaw the neceſſity of caution and circumſpection, leſt Lady George, by heaping favours on her, ſhould expect ſuch returns and compliances as neither ſuited her temper nor her ſituation in life. She wiſhed ſhe had had time to aſk Mr. Carwell in what points he thought her ladyſhip deficient, that ſhe might have known againſt what to arm herſelf; and ſhe determined, when ſhe next ſaw him, to tell him the particulars of her circumſtances, and to beg of him ſuch information as might enable her to behave with prudence, ſafety, and propriety.

At eight the carriage came for her, and took up Lady George in Pall Mall. They went together to her box at the Opera-houſe, and Conſtance endeavoured to diſmiſs the ſubject of her late meditation, that ſhe might receive pleaſure from the performance. In a few minutes a gentlemen of Lady George's acquaintance entered the box, the exceſſive freedom of whoſe converſation aſtoniſhed and diſguſted Miſs Fitzarthur. A ſucceſſion of gentlemen, chiefly of the military rank, came in, ſome of whom had been of the dinner party, and in conſequence of it were totally unfit for company: all

all reſtraint being taken off by hilarity, their converſation with each other, and with Lady George, was ſuch as nothing could excuſe, and only intoxication account for. All hope of being ſuffered to hear any part of the opera, Conſtance was forced to abandon, and readily would ſhe have given up that or any other gratification, to have got out of the houſe. Another opening of the box-door made her almoſt deſperate, and prompted her to invent ſome pretext to eſcape: the perſon who came in was Lord Farnford, whom ſhe was not ſorry to ſee, as he was ſober, and perhaps if he was aware of her painful ſituation, might relieve her. He paid his devoirs to Lady George, and then getting near Conſtance, entered into particular chat with her: the eyes of thoſe near them were now turned towards her, as if ſhe had, till he diſtinguiſhed her, remained inviſible: he ſaid to her in a low voice:—"I muſt not forget myſelf, and ſtay too long with you,"—then quitted her, and talked ſome time in a whiſper to Lady George; a dance interrupted them, he went out, and there remained only two gentlemen in the box.

Lord George Brenville now joined them, in a ſtate of vociferous intoxication; the loudneſs of the trio attracted the notice of ſeveral near them, and her ladyſhip, ſeeing by Conſtance's countenance that ſhe was uneaſy, endeavoured to ſilence them, but to no purpoſe; ſhe then, hitting her huſband a ſmart blow with her fan, told him his

noiſe

noiſe was too much for Miſs Fitzarthur; this had ſome effect, though not that intended; for he, profeſſing in ſcarcely articulate ſounds his ſorrow for having diſturbed her, reeled towards her to make his peace: his folly, his familiarity, his affecting to pay her compliments, his admiration of her, and the licence of his whole behaviour, rendered her uneaſineſs intolerable, and really made her ill.

Lady George now adviſed her going to the tea-room, and offered to accompany her, which ſhe joyfully accepted, and ſoon recovered; but not chuſing to be again expoſed as ſhe had juſt been, ſhe intimated a wiſh that ſhe could return home. This would have been relinquiſhed as impoſſible to be gratified, had not Lord Farnford, hearing of her indiſpoſition, ſought her, to make a tender of his ſervices: her getting away Lady George deemed impracticable, however he undertook to accompliſh it, and then her ladyſhip, whoſe objection was evidently founded on her unwillingneſs to quit her amuſement, acquieſced in its poſſibility. Conſtance did not much reliſh putting herſelf under Lord Farnford's protection; yet, after having been ſo urgent to go home, ſhe could not decline it, otherwiſe than by ſaying ſhe would not give him ſo much trouble: he inſiſted on calling his carriage up, and Lady George laughing, ſaid to him;—"Take her with you: we all know how much "trouble it is for Lord Farnford to wait on

Miſs

"Miſs Fitzarthur:" and then returned into the houſe.

On inquiring, the footmen were found; but the carriage was not; a circumſtance which angered his lordſhip, though it pleaſed Conſtance, who now propoſed ſending for a chair: he would have perſuaded her to go back to Lady George till her coach came, but ſhe had no inclination to a renewal of her uneaſineſs; a chair was therefore procured, Lord Farnford ſaw her in ſecurity, and his ſervants attended her home.

When ſhe was alone ſhe reflected on what had paſt, and perceived with ſorrow that every change in her ſituation produced new evils: ſhe learnt from Lady George's ſignificant ſpeech, that Lord Farnford's attention to her was thought particular, and from the unreſtrained converſation ſhe had heard, ſhe was apprehenſive that her protectreſs was leſs circumſpect than her exalted ſituation required her to be.

To have drawn a concluſion from ſo ſhort an acquaintance would have been precipitate; therefore, and leſt ſhe ſhould be uncharitable, ſhe endeavoured to quiet her fears, determining only to do nothing that ſhe could not readily juſtify, and, if ſhe found cauſe, to withdraw from the houſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

ERROR.

ABOUT one o,clock Lady George Brenville came home, and about five her huſband: the violent noiſe and buſtle which ſucceeded to his return had ſubſided, and a midnight ſilence reigned, when Conſtance, finding that it was nearly eight o'clock, roſe and went down ſtairs, intending to walk in a ſmall opening behind the houſe.—— As ſhe croſſed the hall, ſhe was met by Mr. Carwell, who with ſurprize aſked her whither ſhe was going; ſhe told him, and he adviſed her rather to walk in the ſquare, adding, that he ſhould be happy in accompanying her: her wiſh to ſpeak to him inclined her to accept the civility, and they went out together.

When ſhe related to him what had paſſed the preceding evening, and hinted her aſtoniſhment at the latitude Lady George allowed in converſation, he ſhook his head, and anſwered:—"You ſee, "madam, how ſoon a woman may trifle away her "dignity: when I firſt knew Lady George Bren- "ville, nobody addreſſed her but with reſpect; "now all treat her with an equal degree of famili- "arity, that appears to me inſulting. This is the "conſequence of being always in the public gaze,

"and

" and neglecting thoſe ſituations in which women
" ſhine more honourably, and leſs dangerouſly.—
" Lady George would think any one mad who
" ſhould tell her, that ſhe would make a better ap-
" pearance in her nurſery than at an opera or a maſ-
" querade, and nine tenths of the women of quality
" in London would join her; but this will not make
" the fact otherwiſe, nor convince me, that it is either
" rational, prudent, becoming, or not heniouſly im-
" moral for one whoſe elevated rank renders her an
" example, to ſpend one half of the day in lying a-
" bed, dreſſing, and paying uſeleſs viſits; and the
" other half, with the night laid into it, in amuſe-
" ments, which, inſtead of anſwering the purpoſes
" of recreation, fatigue; and in hearing nonſenſe
" that tends to corrupt her morals."

CONSTANCE expreſſed without reſerve to Mr. Carwell her fears, leſt Lady George's want of caution in her own conduct might involve any one who ſhould be her companion, in difficulties: ſhe mentioned to him, how ſhe had been teazed by Lord George's impertinence; and aſked him whether, if the world underſtood her ladyſhip's foibles, ſhe ſhould not be blamed for appearing with her? —" No madam," Mr. Carwell anſwered, " your
" connexions and expectations are, I find, abun-
" dantly ſufficient to authorize you; beſide, you
" are perfectly ſafe while you have one ſo well
" able and ſo much inclined to protect you: high
" rank will not, I own, always ſtop the mouth of

"detraction, but when it is known that any im-
"peachment will be immediately revenged, or in
"other words, that a fighting gentleman protects
"a lady, a regard for perſonal ſafety does that
"which ought to be the effect of benevolence and
"charity:—you need not be afraid," continued
he, while Conſtance remained ſilent and unable to
comprehend his meaning, "were you indeed with-
"out friends, Lady George's want of conſider-
"ation might occaſionally diſtreſs you; but you
"are too diſtinguiſhed to be ſubject to any thing
"like inſult, at leaſt from ſober men." "Indeed,
"Sir," replied Conſtance, "you are miſinformed,
"if you think I have any better protection than
"innocence;—I muſt truſt entirely to my own
"actions for ſafety, for I know not any gentleman
"in England to whom I could with propriety
"apply for protection." "You might at all times
"*command* it," interrupted Mr. Carwell.——
"From whom?" Conſtance aſked. "Why ſure-
"ly from Lord Farnford," returned he." "From
"Lord Farnford?" ſaid ſhe, "he is one of the
"laſt men in the world whoſe protection I would
"aſk, and I have ever reckoned and found the
"being obliged to accept it a ſevere misfortune."

"Your ideas of delicacy," replied Mr. Car-
well, "are, I perceive, very refined; yet you
"are ſtill ſafe, for the world does not know you
"would not avail yourſelf of this advantage, and
"will therefore ſuppoſe the danger as great as it
"appears."

" appears." " I ought," ſaid Miſs Fitzarthur, " to rejoice even in a ſecurity ariſing from *wrong* " ideas in others; but really this imagined protec- " tion is highly injurious to me, and I dare ſay " Lord Farnford would reſent ſuch a ſuppoſition; " for many who will *give* very liberally, are juſtly " offended at being *drawn on* for their bounty." " I fear," replied Mr. Carwell, " that either my " notions of your ſituation are very erroneous, or " that you miſunderſtand me." " Then tell me," ſaid ſhe, " what your notions are, and I will either " correct or confirm them."

"The day before you came to Lady George's," anſwered Mr. Carwell, " I heard her tell ſome " company at dinner, whom ſhe was to have on a " viſit to her; many knew you, and others aſked " if it was *Lord Farnford's Miſs Fitzarthur?* ſhe " replied that it was, and the converſation then " turned on what I conſtrued into an intended " match between you; it was talked of as highly " advantageous to you; Lord Farnford's perſeve- " rance was admired, and on her ladyſhip's an- " ſwering a doubt ſuggeſted, whether it would at " laſt be a match, by taking on herſelf to aſſure " the perſon that it would be, and that preparations " were actually making for the wedding; many " rejoiced at it, and were invited to meet you the " next day, with a charge, which appeared to con- " tain ſomething myſterious, not to mention Lord " Farnford in your hearing."

This intelligence made Conſtance ſmile; ſhe told Mr. Carwell, that Lady George was herſelf much deceived; and, ſaid ſhe, "if you will believe me, "it never will be a match, at leaſt not till I have "loſt my ſenſes; I ſuſpected her ladyſhip was in "an error of this kind, and it has been my mis-"fortune to find it very difficult to convince the "world that it is poſſible to diſlike Lord Farnford; "ſo great is the prejudice in his favour." "The "prejudice is great indeed," replied Mr. Carwell, "I know no man ſo univerſally a favourite, and "yet I think his character is very ill underſtood; "I was very much inclined to believe Lady George "impoſed on, and you have now proved that ſhe "is, and have ſolved the only doubt I entertained "after converſing with you yeſterday. That a "perſon of your underſtanding, diſcernment, and "apparent regard for virtue could look with com-"plaiſance on ſuch a man as Lord Farnford, I "will ingeniouſly own, and without fear of offend-"ing you, aſtoniſhed me; and I could only ac-"count for ſo heterogeneous a match as this I had "heard mentioned, by your ſenſe of the danger of "an expoſed ſituation: that you ſhould be obliged "to make ſuch a ſacrifice raiſed my pity for you, "and I wiſhed to learn whether your conſent to "the marriage was the effect of ignorance of Lord "Farnford's character, or the reſult of prudential "motives. I am happy to find you ſo conſiſtent, "and that you have an alternative; for I am per-

"ſuaded

" ſuaded, that that miſery yet remains to be in-
" flicted, from which a connexion with him would
" be a releaſe: he is a man I have ever ſhunned,
" for I am allowed the liberty of dining at my own
" expence, or on the kindneſs of my friends, when
" the company at home is ſuch as I do not like.
" This privilege I enjoy, becauſe I have been
" ſometimes a reſtraint on converſation; and with-
" out it my ſervitude would be intolerable, as my
" profeſſion is frequently the ſubject of their con-
" vivial mirth; an intimation therefore, that
" Lord George has a party of gentlemen to dinner,
" warns me to dine abroad, and the mention of the
" Earl of Farnford as one of them, determines me
" rather to faſt than to meet them."

A ſhower obliged the walkers to return to the houſe; Lady George's woman met Conſtance in the hall with her ladyſhip's compliments, and a requeſt that Miſs Fitzarthur would not wait breakfaſt for her, as ſhe was indiſpoſed, and ſhould lie in bed longer than uſual. This was not a ſubject of vexation; Mr. Carwell had not breakfaſted, and they ſat down together in the parlour where they had dined the preceding day; his wife was the topic of their diſcourſe, and the account he gave of her was ſuch as excited Conſtance's indignation againſt thoſe on whom he was dependant, when he told her that ſince he left Scotland on Lord George's ſummons he had not ſeen her. "I might once," ſaid he, "have
" gone; but it was on condition that I procured and

" paid a ſubſtitute during my abſence ; and this deprived me of the means of defraying my travelling expences ; ſo that eventually it is a refuſal. Never till this moment did Conſtance feel the loſs of her fortune ; never till now did ſhe wiſh for riches.

CHAP. IV.

RENCONTRE.

SHE preſently after, quitted Mr. Carwell ; and between eleven and twelve o'lock, Lady George, who was not yet riſen, ſent to beg to ſpeak with her. Her Ladyſhip was engaged out to dinner at Lord Farnford's, and tried to perſuade Conſtance to be of the party ; but ſhe got excuſed, and could not forbear wondering, when one minute Lady George was talking of her engagement, and the next complaining of being, as ſhe appeared, very ill.

Not knowing her general practice or what her conſtitution would bear, and thinking that ſhe really ran great hazard even by getting up, Conſtance aſked her if ſhe held it prudent to go out.—O yes, replied her Ladyſhip ; I never ſtay at home while I can crawl. I ſhall lie till my hair is to be dreſſed ; but you, my dear, had better go out ; the children would

would thank you for taking them in the carriage; or, if you chuſe to go alone, they ſhall walk.—— Conſtance accepted the firſt propoſal, and the coach was ordered at two. The three eldeſt children and one of the nurſes went with her; their airing was into St. James's Park, and they got out to walk in the Mall.

They had quitted the carriage but a ſhort time, when Conſtance found cauſe to repent her having done ſo. Miſs Brenville called out—Lord Calorne, Lord Calorne, here's Lord Calorne—let's go and meet him,—and inſtantly ſet out, moſt expeditiouſly followed by her brothers.—— What to do, whether it was moſt adviſable to go on towards him, to ſtand ſtill, to retreat, or to return to the coach, ſhe was incapable of judging;—the ſight of him nearly ſuſpended the uſe of her faculties, and this evidence that he was well known to Lord George Brenville's family, compleated her diſtreſs. He would have croſſed the walk, but the children clinging to him, he ſtopped, and talked to them, while Conſtance, reſtrained by having the footman and the nurſe behind her, from a precipitate retreat, went on ſlowly: ſhe paſſed Lord Calorne, who had produced an orange which the children were jumping at, and ſhe hoped if this contention laſted a few minutes, ſhe ſhould be far enough before them to avoid him. Preſently Miſs Brenville, who had gotten the orange, came ruuning after her and tried to drag her to join them; but not being

able to do as ſhe wiſhed, ſhe quitted her, and returned to Lord Calorne, who now walked with the children a few paces behind Miſs Fitzarthur. She heard him aſk the eldeſt how long that lady had been with her manma.—Ever ſince the day before yeſterday, anſwered the child, adding—Now do come and talk to her; you don't know how good-natured ſhe is.—In this requeſt her brother joined, enforcing it by ſaying, with all the earneſtneſs of infancy and admiration—You muſt come and have a peep at her;—look under her hat; ſhe has got two ſuch ſweet eyes.—O ſhe is a beauty! ſo nurſe ſays, and all the maids.

His Lordſhip however was not to be prevailed on; the ſervant tried to ſilence the young gentlemen; and Lord Calorne aſked Miſs Brenville how long the lady was to ſtay with them.—I don't know, ſhe replied; ſhe goes into the country with mamma.

To hear herſelf thus the ſubject of inquiry was not to be borne. Conſtance mended her pace, and kept at a greater diſtance before them. A wiſh now roſe, that it were poſſible to rectify Lord Calorne's miſtake in imagining the letters he had ſent to her were of her writing; for this purpoſe ſhe ſummoned her courage, and determined when ſhe reached the ſtable-yard gate, to propoſe to the children returning to the coach; and, if Lord Calorne was ſtill with them, to addreſs herſelf to him. Accordingly ſhe ſuffered them to come within a few yards of her, and then turning round and ſtopping, ſhe told Miſs Brenville

Brenville ſhe was going to the coach, and deſired that ſhe and her brothers would come, As they approached her, Lord Calorne was quitting them, when forcing herſelf to ſpeak, ſhe ſaid,—My Lord, I wiſh very much to explain a miſtake——ſhe could not utter another word; ſhe drew out her handkerchief, and trembled from head to foot: a pauſe enſued; he waited a few ſeconds, as if to hear what ſhe had to ſay, and then, turning from her to Miſs Brenville, deſired her to tell her mamma he could not dine with her on Monday, nor, he was afraid, before he went out of town. He then abruptly left them; the children ran to the carriage; and Conſtance, ſcarcely able to ſupport herſelf, followed them. In their way home ſhe could not ſo collect herſelf as to diſguiſe her diſtreſs, and ſhe was obliged to aſcribe it to the fatigue of walking.

The life ſhe led at Lord George Brenville's, was of ſuch a kind, as to exclude almoſt all reflection, and had, in ſome meaſure, been favourable to her, as it had prevented her ruminating on the unfortunate events of the laſt twelve months; but this ſuſpenſion neither increaſed her fortitude, nor leſſened her ſenſibility; her feelings were ſtill the ſame, whether they were momentarily or rarely called forth, and what ſhe ſuffered from this unfortunate rencontre, was exquiſitely painful.

As ſoon as they entered the houſe, Lady George deſired to ſee her: ſhe went to her, found her ſtill in bed, and, that Miſs Brenville might deliver her

meſſage, took her in her hand. When what Lord Calorne had ſaid was repeated, Lady George ſeemed aſtoniſhed, and aſked Miſs Fitzarthur if ſhe was ſure that was the meſſage he ſent, for that ſuch a diſappointment was impoſſible, the dinner party for Monday having been invited expreſsly to meet him. —Miſs Brenville is very correct, Conſtance anſwered; I believe ſhe gave the meſſage in the words ſhe received it in.—And did he aſſign no reaſon? Lady George aſked.—No, ſhe replied, he ſaid no more than your Ladyſhip has heard.—Lord Calorne, returned Lady George, is a mighty odd young man: I never ſaw any body ſo altered. I muſt ſend my Lord to him to know the reaſon: it is too late to change the day now; perhaps his engagement may be put off. She then diſmiſſed her daughter, and employed Conſtance to write a note to Lord George, to tell him of Lord Calorne's diſappointment of her, and to deſire him to call on him, and know if the engagement that prevented him, could not be poſtponed. This ſhe ſent by her woman; and Lord George verbally anſwered it by ſaying, they ſhould meet Lord Calorne in the evening, and he would take an opportunity of mentioning it to him.—I forgot, ſaid Lady George, when ſhe received this anſwer, that we ſhould ſee him to-night: we ſup at my brother's; I wiſh, my dear, you would not object to going there with us; we ſhall leave our dinner party by ten. Indeed, replied Conſtance, happy in being allowed a negative,

tive, it would be very improper for me; I muſt beg to remain at home in the evening, for I am ſure ſupping out would lay me up again.

Lady George tried to prevail on her, but Conſtance's reſolution was ſo ſtrengthened by the intimation that ſhe ſhould meet Lord Calorne, that ſhe remained immoveable. This victory gained, ſhe left her Ladyſhip to the duties of her toilet; but was preſently ſummoned again: the indiſpoſition her Ladyſhip complained of at noon, was increaſed, and ſhe now declared herſelf unable to go out. It was therefore agreed that ſhe would remain where ſhe was; and Conſtance was to dine by herſelf in the adjoining room; this ſhe accordingly did; and Lady George expreſſed herſelf much obliged to her for confining herſelf with her.

About nine o'clock, her Ladyſhip's ſorrow for the diſappointment ſhe had met with, getting the better of the regard ſhe had for her health, ſhe fancied herſelf much mended, and was not to be diſſuaded from getting up, and preparing to go to her brother's; ſhe therefore roſe, had her hair dreſſed, and at eleven ſet out in her chair; but not till the hour of her departure did ſhe ceaſe urging Conſtance to go with her: ſhe could not prevail, for the anſwer ſhe received from Miſs Fitzarthur, was that, as ſoon as her Ladyſhip was gone, ſhe ſhould retire to bed.

CHAP. V.

REVENGE.

ALMOST as ſoon as Conſtance reached her chamber, a ſervant came to the door, and gave the maid who waited on her a note for her: it contained a requeſt from Mr. Carwell that ſhe would favour him with half an hour's converſation. Conſidering that rectitude of intention is not always a ſecurity againſt cenſure, and that much might be ſaid if it were known that ſhe ſtaid at home under pretence of care for her health, and ſat up with Mr. Carwell, ſhe thought it moſt prudent to excuſe herſelf, though ſhe wiſhed much to hear why he had ſent to her. She therefore returned her compliments, that ſhe was very ſorry ſhe could not do what he deſired, but that ſhe ſhould have an opportunity of ſeeing him in the morning, and would remember his meſſage.

Before nine o'clock the next morning Lady Geroge's woman came from her Lady, to deſire that Miſs Fitzarthur would walk in the ſquare with the children, and to aſk about what time ſhe would return, as her Ladyſhip would then breakfaſt, and ſhould hope for the pleaſure of her company. Conſtance, ſcarcely underſtanding the requeſt, replied that ſhe would be at home at any time Lady George would

would name, half paſt ten was appointed, and being told that the children were ready, ſhe, though a little vexed at being obliged to poſtpone ſeeing Mr. Carwell, went down with them. In the hall he met them, looked diſappointed, and aſked if ſhe was going out—ſhe anſwered ſhe was, but would not forget her promiſe: he ſhook his head, and ſaying,—I beg, Madam, I may ſee you at the firſt leiſure, returned into the parlour.

Hoping to give him an opportunity, which from his anxiety in ſeeking it, ſhe ſuppoſed he had ſome good reaſon for wiſhing for, ſhe contrived to come home rather before the appointed time, but he was then with Lord George: ſhe therefore went to her Ladyſhip; breakfaſt was ſent in, and they ſat down together. The plan of the day was ſettled, and communicated: the morning was devoted to ſhopping; dinner was ordered at four, and places were taken for the play, whither Lady George inſiſted on Conſtance's accompanying her, as it would not oblige her to ſit up late.

The following Thurſday, ſhe was now told, was the day fixed on for their leaving London, and her Ladyſhip talked, with more feeling than Conſtance expected, of the pleaſure ſhe promiſed herſelf from her company in the country. That they were ſoon to quit ſo irregular a life as that they led in town, was no grief to Miſs Fitzarthur, nor had ſhe any one in London from whom ſhe regretted her abſence; yet there was ſomething

which

which damped the enjoyment she would otherwise have looked for, in the idea that she was forsaking all the connections she had already formed, to attach herself to people whose conduct and principles militated against her own; but gratitude would not suffer her to encourage sentiments of dislike: she felt very sensibly Lady George's kindness; and considered, that however injudiciously she might demonstrate her affection, her obligation was not lessened; and she flattered herself that in retirement, as it would remove her from the vortex of dissipation which now made her giddy, she would discover herself possessed of many virtues, and that she might be an amiable companion.

At the first pause after breakfast, Constance rose to go in hopes of finding Mr. Carwell; but she was detained to hear how the interval preceding Thursday was allotted: the following day, which was Sunday, was that on which her Ladyship was to give her last grand rout. Miss Fitzarthur involuntarily started at the information; for notwithstanding she had been accustomed to high life, this was a practice she was only by report acquainted with, Mrs. Stavenell having uniformly declined card-invitations for that day.—Lady George perceiving her countenance moved, asked her what was the matter.—Do you approve, she replied, of having cards on Sunday?—No, said her Ladyship, I do not *approve* it; indeed I have never thought much about it: one must do it, or look singular, and that I mortally hate.

hate. Do not ſay any thing about it, or Carwell will grumble. I wiſh the gentleman would pleaſe to hold his tongue, and eat his pudding. It is ſuch a piece of primitive Chriſtianity, I am almoſt tempted to think he hid himſelf in ſome corner, and eſcaped the deluge.——Oh! you breakfaſted with him yeſterday, my dear: what do you think of him? is he not a queer creature? what did he entertain you with?—an account of his wife?

He mentioned her, Conſtance anſwered, and regretted his abſence from her in ſuch terms, as made me wiſh he could ſee her. Well, he may ſoon perhaps, ſaid Lady George; but did he not draw her like an angel? One would imagine, to hear him, that ſhe was the very beſt woman in the world.——Conſtance remarked, that his error was on the right ſide.——Very true, replied her Ladyſhip, and yet I dare ſay after all, my couſin, ſweet Mrs. Carwell, is ſome awkward red-faced Scotch dowdy.—I have not heard any thing of her for a long while; indeed Carwell and I ſeldom meet now, for we are not very good friends. I am ſorry for that, Conſtance replied: by what I ſaw of him, I thought him a deſerving man. Yes, reſumed Lady George, ſo he is, in ſome reſpects; but he choſe to take part with a very fine lady, who was recommended to me as a governeſs for the girls: an ignorant creature that taught them nothing, and uſed them ſhockingly; and he and I have been at odds ever ſince; he had better have been ſilent; for at

that

that time my brother had a living of 300l. a year; to give away, and he offered me a preſentation to it for Carwell; but I thought this too great a price to pay for the gentleman's good humour, and therefore let my brother give it to whom he would.

The portrait Lady George had now drawn of her own heart, inclined Conſtance to think ſtill better of Mr. Carwell: the contempt with which he was treated, the cruelty of her revenge, and the pleaſure which ſhe ſeemed to take in depreciating his worth, excited her indignation at the one, and her pity for the other. All ideas of pleaſure to be derived from the ſociety of a perſon ſo regardleſs of the happineſs of a fellow-creature, ſo unjuſt, and ſo malicious, in a moment vaniſhed, and not even the ſenſe of her obligations to Lady George Brenville could make her refrain from deſpiſing her.—But ſhe was not long allowed to reflect; her countenance declared that ſhe was deficient in the *vrai gaut* for tormenting, and that ſhe did not rejoice in the injury done to Mr. Carwell. Her Ladyſhip, therefore reſuming the diſcourſe, from which ſhe had digreſſed, to ſpeak of him, ſaid, that on Monday they were to have a large company to dinner: and by the way, continued ſhe, I forgot to tell you about Lord Calorne: you know we were to ſee him laſt night at my brother's, and meant to inquire of him, his reaſon for diſappointing us. Well! he was not come when we went in, and I aſked my ſiſter if ſhe did not expect him: ſhe told me—No; for

that

that he had called in juſt before dinner, and ſaid ſomething particular had happened, which would prevent his coming; ſo I fancy he means to ſerve every body ſo; and the way my ſiſter ſays he excuſed himſelf in, was the oddeſt that could be: when he came in, ſhe told me, he ſeemed to call only by way of goſſipping; and they talked of ſeveral things and people: at laſt ſhe happened to mention who he would meet at ſupper, which was not a matter of importance or any thing new to him; for the party was ſettled three weeks ago; and you were the only addition to it, or elſe ſhe declares ſhe ſhould have thought he did not like the company; for very ſoon after he made his excuſe, and not chuſing to give any ſatisfactory reaſon, went away. Now did you ever hear of ſuch unaccountable behaviour? He is an odd young man. I am ſorry for it; he uſed to be extremely agreeable.

Perhaps, ſaid Conſtance, who could very well have explained his conduct, and ſaw plainly why he would not dine at Lord George's on Monday, Lord Calorne did not care to meet you till he had apologized for his diſappointing you.—Lord! my dear, cried her Ladyſhip, could he not as well have done that at my brother's. I believe he is mad.—Miſs Ecklow is quite right in being deliberate, for I dare ſay he will ſoon break out violently.

Though Conſtance had hitherto diſguiſed her intereſt in this converſation, ſhe could not anſwer for being able to hold out much longer; and therefore

fore at the firſt interval roſe, ſaying that if her Ladyſhip could ſpare her, ſhe had a little buſineſs, which ſhe wiſhed to do before ſhe went out.—— Go, by all means, replied Lady George; never let me confine you; you will be in your own room, I ſuppoſe; I ſhall call in, and look at you preſently; for I muſt come up to ſee my pigs; I have not ſeen them ſince Wedneſday.—This civility of coming to her room, Conſtance would have gladly declined; but ſhe could not do it. She hoped however, that ſhe ſhould not be obliged to ſtay long above ſtairs, and might yet have an opportunity of meeting Mr. Carwell before ſhe went out. In leſs than half an hour her Ladyſhip came up, and took her into the nurſery; while they were there the coach came to the door, and Lady George was preſently ready.—Conſtance ſaw Mr. Carwell, as they went down in the little parlour; ſhe ſhook her head at him, and he ſeemed to underſtand her, and ſhe followed Lady George to the carriage.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

INTEGRITY.

THEY returned home before three o'clock, and her Ladyſhip, ſitting down to dreſs, detained Conſtance ſo long in converſation, that the ſpace left her was not more than neceſſary for her getting ready by dinner time. As ſoon as ſhe could free herſelf, ſhe haſtened up ſtairs, hoping by uſing all poſſible expedition, to ſecure five minutes. Leſt, however, ſhe ſhould not be able to meet with Mr. Carwell, ſhe thought it prudent to ſeize the preſent opportunity; and therefore ran down to the parlour, where ſhe fortunately found him. He told her what he had to ſay could not be communicated in ſo ſhort a time as ſhe had to ſpare; that they were both ſo confined as to render their holding any converſation that day impoſſible, and that on the following it would be too late. But, ſaid he, Madam, (taking a letter from his pocket, if you will read this, and can give me an anſwer to night, it will ſerve the purpoſe for which I wiſhed to ſee you: my deſire of giving you the information it contains, verbally, aroſe from an idea that I might perhaps ſoften it. I am ſure, at leaſt I hope, you have preſence of mind ſufficient for the occaſion;

and

and I tell you, when you read it, you muſt collect all your fortitude: do not fail to give me an anſwer.

Aſtoniſhed at what he had ſaid, and impatient to know what he meant, ſhe took the letter, and, hearing Lord George's voice, hurried up ſtairs.

The ſervant who waited on her was in the room; and from the caution given her, ſhe was afraid of witneſſes. To poſtpone the indulgence of her curioſity, was therefore neceſſary; and having beſtowed as little time as poſſible on decoration, ſhe diſmiſſed her maid, opened her letter, and read as follows:

'Madam,

'My dependance on Lord and Lady George 'Brenville, has induced them to make me ſuch a pro- 'poſition as, if I had not hoped for an opportunity of 'conſulting you, I ſhould, from the complexion it 'wears, have inſtantaneouſly rejected; but as I 'can now know from you how I ſhall decline it to 'ſerve you moſt eſſentially, I have deſired ſo much 'time to conſider of it, as I truſted, might procure 'me the information I want. I find that art has been 'made uſe of to keep us aſunder, and that I have no 'reaſon to expect to ſee you alone; however, as this 'method is ſtill open, I ſhould hold myſelf inexcuſa- 'ble if I remained ſilent on a ſubject of ſuch impor- 'tance to you, merely becauſe I was prevented 'from ſpeaking to you.

'I am

'I am wholly unable to preface what I have to 'ſay, by any thing that can ſpare you the pain I am 'apprehenſive you will feel. Your unſuſpicious 'heart will be wounded when you find thoſe whom 'you believed to have acted on the moſt benevo-'lent principles, impoſing on you to ſerve a purpoſe 'which they dare not avow, and plotting the deſtruc-'tion of all your comfort: let the conſideration that 'it is not yet too late to defeat their ſcheme, animate 'you to exertion—you muſt tell me what to do, and 'you may depend on my ſervices.---The matter is 'briefly this:—

'Lord George came to me yeſterday morning 'with an air of uncommon kindneſs, and told me he 'had ſomething to propoſe which he hoped would 'give me pleaſure; he then deſired me to follow 'him to Lady George's dreſſing room, and from 'them jointly I learnt that by a ſmall acquieſcence 'in a wiſh of their's I might ſecure their favour, and 'any indulgence in ſome particulars about which I 'was anxious.---I will not reveal to you, Madam, 'the circumſtances of their offer, leſt you ſhould un-'willingly bid me reject it. I have hitherto lived 'without ſuch favours, and truſt, I ſhall never be 'reduced to eat the bread of iniquity.

'The ſervice I was to perform they informed me, 'would be attended with little or no trouble; with 'neither danger nor expence.---Not *immediately*, 'perhaps, but I ſee it will be attended with infinite

'trou-

'trouble—trouble of mind—danger which none, 'who was not an infidel, would incur—and ex- 'pence of all integrity here, and all hopes hereaf- 'ter. In ſhort, Madam, to tell you as cohe- 'rently as my agitation of mind will permit, it 'was nothing leſs than that, on their arrival in 'the country, I ſhould ſecond their intention of 'obliging you to marry Lord Farnford, who is to 'meet you there for the purpoſe; and by virtue of 'the holy profeſſion to which God has called me, 'doom you to miſery in this world, and myſelf 'eternally in the next. At the repetition of ſuch 'complicated baſeneſs I ſtill ſhudder, though I 'have for the laſt thirty hours thought of nothing 'elſe. I ſee you, while you read this, pale and 'trembling; but do not be diſcouraged; be confi- 'dent, and tell me how I ſhall beſt ſerve you.

'Were I to decline, as I might do, being the 'inſtrument of ſuch an outrage, I ſhould, I fear, 'leave you ſtill expoſed to their attempts by other 'means. I will not preſume to dictate to you, 'only let me entreat you, if this unexpected infor- 'mation deprives you of the power of conſidering 'what is *beſt* to be done, not to ſuffer any fear of 'injuring me, to keep you a moment longer than is 'neceſſary in this ſtate of danger. One method I 'will venture to propoſe:—ſhew this letter to Lady 'George, and I will not ſhrink from the conſe- 'quences.

'I will

'I will not Madam, take up your time, which 'would be beſt beſtowed in providing for your 'ſafety, longer than to aſſure you, nothing ſhall 'prevail on me to be the abettor of ſuch a ſcheme; 'and that I am, with the greateſt regard and reſpect,

'your moſt obedient humble ſervant,

'BRENVILLE CARWELL.'

The dinner bell rang juſt as ſhe had finiſhed the peruſal of this aſtoniſhing letter; but her maid was ſo occupied, that, though ſhe heard, ſhe did not obey it. A ſervant came to call her, and ſhe went down to the dining parlour, with a heart very little diſpoſed to meet thoſe with whom ſhe was to ſit at table. She was almoſt ſtupified with horror, and ſcarcely able to recollect where ſhe was, or whom ſhe ſaw. To prevent inquiries, ſhe endeavoured to appear compoſed, and was comforted by ſeeing Mr. Carwell was to be of the party: a head-ach bore the blame of her viſible diſorder, and excuſed her from any ſhare in the converſation, which, if *converſation* it could be called, was as cold and lifeleſs as that of perſons who are out of their element when left with no other company than their family, uſually is. As ſoon as dinner was removed ſhe begged permiſſion to retire, which, as her going to the play was inſiſted on, was granted, as it would conduce to her recovery.

She now began to deliberate, as calmly as ſhe could, on the anſwer ſhe ſhould give Mr. Carwell; and forcing her thoughts from the contemplation

plation of the treachery that had ſo nearly in-ſnared her, to the means of avoiding it, her firſt reſolve was not to go into the country with Lord George's family: ſhe hoped to have an opportunity the next day of ſeeing Mr. Carwell and adviſing with him on the ſteps ſhe ſhould take; in the mean time ſhe ſaw nothing elſe was neceſſary, than to furniſh him with an anſwer to the propoſal. The method which appeared to her beſt calculated to ſecure as well Mr. Carwell as herſelf, was, for him to accept the offer: as ſhe intended quitting the houſe before Thurſday, it could do her no harm, and would prevent his feeling any ill affects from reſentment: on this ſhe therefore concluded, and wrote her ſentiments in this billet:

'SIR,

'With the ſincereſt gratitude for your ge-'neroſity and concern for me, I preſume to adviſe 'your accepting Lord George's offer, on condi-'tion you are required to do no more than the 'duty of your profeſſion: this advice you may 'ſafely follow, for I will not ſtay here till Thurſ-'day: if however, it can any way hurt you, 'reject it, and adopt any other method. I am 'forced to go to the play this evening, but to-'morrow morning I will, at all events, come early 'into the little parlour, and conſult you how I ſhall 'act.

'I am your moſt obliged humble ſervant,

'CONSTANCE MATILDA FITZARTHUR.'

The

The next thing to be done was, to convey this note, and to do ſo ſecurely was difficult. Employing a ſervant, might perhaps be the means of diſcovering Mr. Carwell's kindneſs, and the chances againſt her meeting him accidentally were many. —Not being able to deviſe any unobjectionable ſcheme, ſhe put the note in her pocket, and went to the parlour, where the party ſhe had left, ſtill were. To her great ſatisfaction, ſhe ſoon found that Mr. Carwell was to go to the play with them, ſo that ſhe could hardly fail of the opportunity ſhe waited for.

They all went together to the ſtage-box; and Conſtance, whoſe thoughts were occupied, not with what ſhe was to ſee, but with what ſhe had learned, begged to ſit behind Lady George. Mr. Carwell ſeemed to expect her availing herſelf of their ſituation; and ſhe, at the firſt moment when the attention of her companions was ſufficiently engaged, ſlipped the note into his hand.

She waited impatiently for the time of returning home, that ſhe might get rid of the reſtraint her being obliged to ſeem in ſome meaſure amuſed was on her: her opinion of what others ſaw, heard, and were charmed with, was aſked, when ſhe had not attended to any part of it; and ſhe was forced again to adopt of the excuſe the head-ach.

At laſt the entertainment was over, and they got into the carriage. Lord and Lady George, on their arrival at home, ſat down to ſupper, from which

ſhe got eaſily excuſed, and went immediately to bed; where the night was miſerably ſpent in rumination on this new misfortune; to avoid which, was however, eaſy. About nine the next morning, ſhe went down, found Mr. Carwell waiting for her; and at the ſight of him burſt into tears. He endeavoured to cheer her; and renewing his promiſes of aſſiſtance, began to talk to her on what ſhe had determined to do. He expreſſed himſelf indebted to her for having ſo ſecured him againſt Lord George's anger; and told her, he had accepted the offer, provided he was only called in to read the ſervice.—She then adviſed with him on the manner in which ſhe ſhould leave the houſe: to do it abruptly, though her treacherous benefactreſs might gueſs the reaſon, would, to the world, bear the appearance of ingratitude; and what excuſe to find for quitting it, ſhe knew not.

They had proceeded no farther when they heard Lady George's woman inquiring if Miſs Fitzarthur was gone out. Mr. Carwell immediately went into the next room, and the ſervant brought a requeſt from her Lady, that Conſtance would breakfaſt with her at eleven. If Lady Geoege wiſhes it, ſhe replied, I will certainly wait on her; otherwiſe I intended breakfaſting earlier, and going to church.—This anſwer was delivered; and her Ladyſhip's polite acquieſcence returned. Conſtance then deſired to have the tea-things ſent into the parlour, where ſhe was, and ſhe and Mr. Carwell ſat down together.

to the. She now aſked him what could be the motive that actuated people, ſo nearly ſtrangers to her, thus clandeſtinely to interfere in that, in which they had no concern. Of this he ſeemed fully informed, and told her, he would develope the ſcheme to her. It originates, ſaid he, with her Ladyſhip; with whom the Earl is much too great a favourite. Putting together what I have at various times heard and ſeen, I collect that the inviting you hither was concerted between theſe two. She idolizes Lord Farnford, and would, I am convinced, ſacrifice every conſideration to pleaſe him: he knew he was ſure of her ſervices; and, to prevail on her huſband, he offered ſuch pecuniary temptations, as he by experiment had found irreſiſtible. Lord George Brenville is needy, and his conſcience by no means invulnerable. From the anxiety manifeſted in this buſineſs, I infer, that the advantages accruing from it are great; every thing is now ſettled; and your hoſpitable friends either are, or affect to be perſuaded, that you will be as well pleaſed as any body. This was urged to me as a reaſon for my concurrence; but I was well aſſured that your diſlike of Lord Farnford was too radical to be impoſed on. I think myſelf ſingularly happy in having previouſly learned your ſentiments, and in being made the means of preſerving you from a deſign, which, as all poſſible art has been uſed to inſpire you with confidence, might have entrapped you.

Juſt as breakfaſt was finiſhed, her Ladyſhip ſent to deſire Miſs Fitzarthur would come to her. I believe, ſaid Mr. Carwell, Lady George is not quite eaſy with reſpect to me; ſhe thinks I ſhall betray her; and if you find it expedient to own that I have done ſo, I beg you will. Nothing ſhall induce me to it, Conſtance anſwered; if I ſaw any danger of my being reduced to ſuch an extremity, I would leave the houſe this minute, rather than go to her.

CHAP. VII.

SUNDAY.

SHE found Lady George juſt ariſen. So, my dear Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid ſhe, you are moſt devoutly going to church! have you breakfaſted? —You did not breakfaſt alone, I hope, did you? —On her anſwering in the negative, her Ladyſhip continued—I wanted to deſire you to have the carriage, and to aſk you to take Miſs Brenville with you,

you, for she has never yet been in a church; and I dare say she will be quite delighted if you will be so kind as to let her go with you.—Certainly, replied Constance, I shall be happy to oblige her.—You are very good, said Lady George; how are you engaged afterwards? you must go with me to Hyde-Park.—If you please, she answered; but I must beg your Ladyship to dispense with my being in the drawing room to-night.—Do as you like best, said her Ladyship; but I shall be pulled to pieces if you are not there. If you do not like cards on a Sunday, I will not oblige you to play; only, surely you might be in the room. Constance repeating her wish to be excused, Lady George asked what she must say to those who inquired after her: must I tell them, said she, that you went away for fear the cieling should tumble on us for playing on a Sunday? they will kill themselves with laughing.—Assign what reason you think proper, replied Constance; I am sure your Ladyship would not ——— Here she broke off, recollecting that there was nothing improper that she could be sure her Ladyship would not do; but the hiatus was not perceived.—Lady George, of course answered: Certainly not; do as is most agreeable to yourself; and, with this licence, Miss Fitzarthur, to avoid further importunity, left her.

She went to church with Miss Brenville, who kindly, by the intolerable rudeness of her behaviour, prevented equally her attending to the service and to

the ſubject ſhe was moſt prone to meditate on. On her return, ſhe found Lady George dreſſing; a ſucceſſion of viſitors, who, in the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, came to beſtow that time on her which they could not otherwiſe employ, detained her till three o'clock, when ſhe and Conſtance ſet out for the Sunday drag.

It was happy that Lady George's ſpirits were more than commonly high, as the continual ſupply of ideas in her own mind prevented her obſerving her companion's dejection, and ſuperſeded all neceſſity of exertion. Under ſuch melancholy circumſtances, to have ſupported converſation, of even the lighteſt kind, and with an indifferent perſon, would have been painful, how much more ſo with one who ſhe knew, while externally ſhe appeared, if thoughtleſs and trifling, yet artleſs and undeſigning, meditated a plot againſt her, the inevitable tendency of which to ruin her peace, no want of conſideration, no indiſpoſition to look forward, could have concealed from her! for Lady George was not defective either in judgment or penetration: where her paſſions and her intereſt were unconcerned, her ſagacity was conſpicuous; but what was her *inclination*, was firſt conſulted, and reaſon, honour, duty, virtue, all yielded to their deſpotic ſovereign.

The dinner party this day, was that of the one preceding: the remove into the country was the topic of converſation; and Conſtance was obliged to hear deſcriptions of enjoyments ſhe never meant

to

to partake of, and promiſes of pleaſure which ſhe never intended calling on them to fulfill. When they roſe from table, Lady George, whoſe attachment to her *dear* Miſs Fitzarthur ſeemed hourly to increaſe, would not ſuffer her to go, alledging, that as ſhe was not to ſee her in the evening, ſhe could not bear to loſe ſo much of her company.

At laſt the hurry of the rout began, and Conſtance having previouſly borrowed a book of Mr. Carwell, retired to the dreſſing room, where her affectionate friend had deſired her to ſit that ſhe might relieve her fatigue when her company was diſpoſed of, by coming to chat with her. The diſtraction of her thoughts, and the buſtle of the houſe made it impoſſible for her to fix her attention: ſhe was ſo much engroſſed by Lady George Brenville's newly diſcovered character, that there was no room in her mind to admit any other idea, and therefore laying her book away ſhe became abſorbed in contemplation. Her Ladyſhip did not leave her long in ſolitude; ſhe well knew how dreadful it was, and the benevolence of her nature would not ſuffer her to expoſe her beloved to it's horrors: ſhe tried to perſuade her to come into the drawing-room, but failing, ſhe deſiſted, and away ſhe went: in a few minutes ſhe returned with Lady Emma Peryton, who hearing Miſs Fitzarthur was in the houſe, could not reſt till ſhe had ſeen her; her ſtay was not long, but it was an introduction to that which Conſtance wiſhed to avoid: all of her acquaintance

now came to her, and others, to whom the heat of the card rooms was intolerable, seeing the track many followed, sought this more temperate climate; so that she was as much engaged in company as she could have been in the drawing-room.

At length they were again summoned to their seats, and Constance, being once left alone, hoped she should remain so: this felicity she had not enjoyed a quarter of an hour, when Lord Farnford came in: she shrunk at the sight of him, yet afraid of awakening his suspicion, she strove to appear collected, and asked him how long Lady Emma had been come.—I do not know, he replied; but why will you not come into the drawing-room?---Because, she answered, I neither love cards nor a crouded room.—I hate them both, said Lord Farnford; and so, if you please, you and I will sit down here.—No, surely, returned she, you will not stay here; I beg you will not.—His Lordship was not to be so driven away; he seated himself, and seemed determined to take up his abode there for the remainder of the evening. This awkward situation, and the fear that any one who would put an ill construction on it, should see it, made Constance very uneasy; she rose from her chair, and having walked a few turns in the room, attempted to pass him; but he had placed himself so near the door, that she could not get out undiscovered; and when he saw her intention, he moved to render it impossible. Not chusing to have an open disputation with

with him, ſhe took no notice of his hindering her and tried again to prevail on him to go back to the company, till finding all perſuaſion fruitleſs, ſhe gave it up in deſpair. What at his entrance ſhe had ſuſpected, was now confirmed; the extraordinary ſtate of his ſpirits, and the abſurdity of his converſation, demonſtrating that he was not perfectly ſober, though he was ſomething ſhort of poſitively drunk. The ingenuouſneſs incident to ſuch a ſtate, put him off his guard; and complaining of her cruelty, he told her, in terms which Mr. Carwell's information had rendered intelligible, that, in ſpite of all her art and contrivance, he would have her, and that a few days would convince her of it. She made no reply, but in her own mind ſincerely rejoiced that ſhe had been ſo warned of his intentions.

A little management would now have pumped from him a diſcovery of the whole ſcheme; but as ſhe ſtood in need of no farther information, her endeavours were directed towards getting rid of him: in about half an hour ſhe was relieved by Lady George, who came to ſeek him; finding ſhe could not detach him from Conſtance, and perhaps fearing that in his ſtate of demi-intoxication he might be more communicative than prudent, ſhe complied with her requeſt to be permitted to retire, and thus ſhe was freed from her troubleſome companion.

When ſhe recovered from the fermentation his viſit had occaſioned, ſhe began to reflect ſeriouſly

on the method by which ſhe ſhould get away from the houſe, and what ſhe ſhould do afterwards; but ſhe was incapable of forming any plan that was not liable to objection: the fear of erring made her diſtruſt her own judgment, and ſhe referred all to her meeting with Mr. Carwell.

Before ſhe left her room the next morning, ſhe received, by one of the maid ſervants, a note from him, deſiring to ſee her as ſoon as convenient. She immediately went to the parlour, and found him there: he apologized for calling her down, which he ſaid, the danger of not having another opportunity of ſpeaking to her, obliged him to do; for, continued he, my lord laſt night told me that, as I ſeemed anxious to keep clear of every part of this affair, excepting that which I had agreed to perform, he thought it might be better for me, to ſet off for the country before they went; and he urges me to go to-day. I ſee his motive, which is, I am ſure, the fear that I ſhould be wrought on, by reflection and converſing with you, to warn you of your ſituation; but I have been obliged to acquieſce, provided I can get ſome little matters in hand concluded firſt, that is to ſay, between you and I, provided you do not wiſh it otherwiſe. I therefore wanted to know of you, whether you think my ſtaying here at all neceſſary to your ſecurity; if you do, I will endeavour to poſtpone my going till the day before the family leave town; but I ſhould ſuppoſe, that in whatever ſcheme you form, I can hardly

harly aſſiſt you, unleſs I declare myſelf your friend, which I am at this moment ready to do, if you think it prudent or advantageous to you.

To be thus deprived of her chief ſupport, was a very ſenſible grief to Conſtance; but, as ſhe could not hope, if Lord George's motive was what Mr. Carwell ſuppoſed it, that he would be ſhaken from his purpoſe, ſhe ſaw it was beſt to ſubmit, and to avail herſelf of the advice her friend could give her, which was indeed the only aſſiſtance he could render her. After propoſing many things which on examination were found not feaſible, it was determined that, unleſs ſome occaſion preſented itſelf, by which ſhe could excuſe it, ſhe ſhould leave the houſe on Wedneſday, without aſſigning a cauſe, or informing any one of her intention; and as her returning to Mrs. Langrivier's would not remove her from the evil, for thither Lady George on miſſing her would undoubtedly follow her, ſhe accepted Mr. Carwell's offer of providing a retreat for her at the houſe of a friend in Conduit-ſtreet, where ſhe might remain a viſitor as long as it ſuited her. This ſhe conſidered as a dreadful expedient, but it was the only one practicable: ſhe ſaw the ill conſtruction that would be affixed to her apparent ingratitude, and ſhe knew Lady George's charity would not ſcreen her from public cenſure: ſhe had however no alternative, ſince ſhe could not expect that ſo favourite a ſcheme would be dropped on the only ſuggeſtions ſhe could uſe. As ſoon as this was concluded on, ſhe with

tears took leave of Mr. Carwell, who was not leſs hurt at being obliged to quit her ſo far ſhort of ſecurity.

She remained, till Lady George roſe, alone, and formed in her mind an hundred excuſes by which ſhe might decline the journey, none of which were adequate to the purpoſe. Wearied with conſideration and rejection, and apprehenſive that, however eligible any method appeared, it might in the end throw ſuſpicion on Mr. Carwell, ſhe thought it leaſt dangerous to purſue the path he had marked out for her, though the idea of leaving clandeſtinely a houſe where ſhe had, to all outward ſemblance been ſo kindly entertained, was very repugnant to her inclinations.

With an increaſed dread of ſeeing Lady George Brenville ſhe obeyed her ſummons to breakfaſt at noon, and found her in high good-humour; the uſual compliments over, the plan of engagement for the day was produced: the morning was devoted to ſhopping and viſits, the remainder to dreſſing, and a dinner party at home. Through the whole of this Conſtance was to accompany her Ladyſhip, and the occupation was ſuch as obliged them to ſet out as ſoon as breakfaſt was over.—After having explored every region of folly and finery, they made about half a ſcore friendly calls, and returned home, only juſt time enough to prepare for the reception of the viſitors.

CHAP

CHAP. VIII.

DISCOVERY.

THE company, who had been invited to meet Lord Calorne, aſſembled; and having heard ſeparately and conjointly, of his cruel diſappointment, and wondered ſufficiently at it, they were called to the dinner parlour. Nothing remarkable occurred; the party was of rather a more rational order than were uſually found at Lord George Brenville's table; the ladies withdrew up ſtairs early in the evening; and, as there was no ſupper, about eleven ſoberly departed. Lord George then went out; his lady, who complained of exceſſive fatigue, retired to her chamber; and Conſtance, having little inclination to ſleep, ſat down in the parlour to acknowledge the receipt of a remittance from Lord Drumferne; ſhe was ſealing her letter, when a meſſage came from Lord George, deſiring that nobody would ſit up for him, as he ſhould not be at home till the forenoon of the next day. This ſhe thought it right her ladyſhip ſhould know; leſt his ſtay might alarm her, and imagining that ſhe could hardly have diſmiſſed her woman, ſhe went up, and knocked at the dreſſing-room door. Lady George

George, as if concluding it was her ſervant, anſwered pettiſhly, "come in, can't you?" when Conſtance opening the door, to her inexpreſſible amazement, ſaw her ladyſhip in her night-cap and diſhabille, ſitting at ſupper with Lord Farnford. She would have retreated, had not Lady George, calling to her, aſked her what ſhe wanted? this Conſtance had nearly forgotten, till a repetition of the queſtion brought it to her remembrance; ſhe then told her.

While ſhe was ſpeaking, Lord Farnford, with all poſſible intrepidity, reached a chair for her, and as ſoon as ſhe was ſilent, ſaid to her ladyſhip "I "fancy you thought Miſs Fitzarthur was gone to "bed, I ſuppoſe ſhe wonders to ſee me here?" Surprize diminiſhed Conſtance's caution, and ſhe anſwered,—"I am *ſorry* to ſee you here!" "For "why?" ſaid Lady George," colouring, "I— "I—I was—you know I was very much tired, and "—and—and I thought it better to ſup here; and "what is there to be ſorry for?" "Your lady- "ſhip is the beſt judge," replied Conſtance.— "Why, what interpretation,"—returned ſhe,— "would you put on it? I beg, Miſs Fitzarthur, "I may have none of your ſuſpicions: what I have "done, I can juſtify:—I ſuppoſe you are jealous, "becauſe Lord Farnford is here;—poor ſoul! it "would have him all to itſelf, and nobody muſt "ſpeak to him!" "Good God!" exclaimed Conſtance, "how can you, Lady George, ſay what

" what I am ſure you do not think?" " I do " think it," ſhe interrupted, " and any one who " knows your whining diſpoſition muſt think it." " For Heaven's ſake, madam," replied Miſs Fitzarthur, " be calm; you do not know what you " ſay." " I am not mad," returned her ladyſhip; " I know very well what you will ſay, becauſe " Lord Farnford and I ſupped together, without " inviting you; but I underſtand you, Miſs Fitz- " arthur, pretty thoroughly; and would adviſe " you to be cautious of what you ſay, for the " world may perhaps cenſure you as well as me." Conſtance, whoſe agitation was now very great, burſt into tears; and, replying only,—" Lady " George, from my heart I pity you, and forgive " your anger,"—left the room. Before ſhe was up ſtairs, Lady George opened the door, and called to her to come back; ſhe returned, and her ladyſhip, in rather a milder tone of voice, ſaid;— " knowing my own innocence, it did not occur to " me till now, that you might put an unfavourable " conſtruction on Lord Farnford's being here; I " therefore called you back to tell you, that it was " to ſettle a private buſineſs, with which Lord " George is fully acquainted, we have met, and " he is now going away."

Lord Farnford, to whom this ſeemed to be novel information, now took up his hat, and aſſuring Miſs Fitzarthur very incoherently, that their only reaſon for ſitting there was, that they might not be interrupted

interrupted, went away. Her ladyſhip walked about, much diſordered; ſhe repeated what ſhe had before ſaid, that Lord George was acquainted with the buſineſs ſhe was engaged in, ſhe returned Conſtance's *bon ſoir* with a mixture of anger and haughtineſs, and they parted.

This accident had ſo ruffled Miſs Fitzarthur, that no endeavours to forget it could procure her reſt. She was however inclined to believe Lady George's aſſertion, and ſuppoſed ſhe had received Lord Farnford ſo privately only for the purpoſe of conſulting on the execution of their grand project: acquitting her therefore, in this inſtance, of all but indiſcretion, and hoping it was impoſſible that the mother of five children could fail in her conjugal duty, ſhe began to think whether it were not feaſible to extract from her unreaſonable anger at being diſcovered, ſome good for herſelf: ſhe felt provoked at Lady George's expreſſions, but thought it poſſible, by affecting to reſent them more than ſhe really did, to avoid going into the country.

The next morning, almoſt as ſoon as ſhe was up, Lady George Brenville came, half dreſt, to her door, and in a tone very different from that ſhe had ſpoken in the night before, begged to be admitted; this requeſt was immediately complied with, and entering, ſhe threw herſelf on a chair, and fell a crying. After many efforts, ſhe ſaid ſhe came to entreat Miſs Fitzarthur's forgiveneſs of her haſty expreſſions the preceding evening. "I forgive them

" them moſt heartily," replied Conſtance, " but I " am very ſorry any one has perſuaded your lady- " ſhip to believe me deſerving of ſuch reproaches." " I do not believe it," ſaid ſhe, ſobbing; " I was " angry, or I ſhould not have thought of it." " I " wiſh," anſwered Miſs Fitzarthur, " I had not " given you occaſion to be angry; I did not mean " to intrude on you; my only intention was to " prevent your being uneaſy at my Lord's ſtaying " from home." " You were very good," ſaid her humbled ladyſhip; " I have another favour to aſk " of you: it is in your power to ruin me and my " children, by mentioning Lord Farnford's being " with me; if my lord ſhould know it he would " kill me—I cannot tell what would be the con- " ſequence; he is already jealous of him, and he " has often ſworn, that if he finds there is cauſe " for it, he will expoſe Lord Farnford, and apply " for a divorce." " Why," replied Conſtance, amazed, " I underſtood that Lord George knew " of your meeting!" " Oh!" cried the ſorrowful lady, ſobbing more vehemently than before, " if " he ever hears of it, I ſhall be ruined; promiſe " me never to mention it to any body, or I ſhall " never be happy." Conſtance, who would willingly have promiſed the forbearance requeſted, now pauſed, and thought ſhe might make the plot concerted againſt her the price of her ſecrecy in this affair; ſhe therefore anſwered, that on one condition ſhe would conceal it.

Lady

Lady George, whoſe terror ſeemed ſuch as would have induced her to agree to any thing that would ſhelter her, eagerly aſked what it was; and Miſs Fitzarthur told her, that however inclined ſhe might be to forgive what had been haſtily uttered, ſhe could not receive obligations from a perſon who was not ſo entirely prepoſſeſſed in her favour as to be incapable of entertaining, for a moment, even in the heat of anger, an ill opinion of her, and that therefore ſhe muſt inſiſt on leaving the houſe immediately, without being ever again importuned to come back.

At this Lady George's tears flowed ſtill faſter, and ſhe begged, in the moſt earneſt manner, that Conſtance would not make ſo hard a condition. "This," ſaid ſhe, "will ruin me with the world; "your quitting me ſo abruptly will make every "body wonder, and ſuſpect me." "No," ſhe replied, "nobody can draw any concluſion pre- "judicial to you from my going, the blame will "light on me." "I cannot conſent to it," returned her ladyſhip" "my lord will murder me for "letting you go; and what reaſon can I give for "it?" "That I would ſtay no longer," anſwered Conſtance; "ſay it was my own choice to go, "and I dare ſay he will be very well ſatisfied; he "cannot be very inquiſitive about it, for he hardly "knows whether I am or am not, in the houſe." "Well, but my dear Miſs Fitzarthur," ſaid Lady George, "do not deſert me ſo cruelly; I will "give

"give you my word never to see Lord Farnford "alone again, if you will stay." "Your lady- "ship," said Constance, "is to use your own dis- "cretion; but common prudence, and a regard "for myself, oblige me to insist on the condition "I proposed, as the only one on which I will "promise silence; I cannot live in Lord George "Brenville's house, and think such a man as Lord "Farnford is privately admitted by his wife, with- "out telling him of it; when I am no longer his "guest, the obligation in some measure ceases." "My dear Miss Fitzarthur," replied her ladyship, "I will not agree to such a separation; my heart "would break if you were to leave me now; you "must go into the country with us; if you chuse "to return to town, I will not ask you to stay with "us above a week; every thing is settled for your "going, and I will rather risque whatever you "may tell my lord than part with you." "This," said Constance, "will detain me only till I can see "Lord George; for when I inform him of what "I have seen, I shall insist on going away, and I "am sure he will acquiesce in the propriety of it." This intimation that she meant to make a discovery, threw her whom it respected into angonies; but Constance, whatever she felt for her, saw that by yielding she was accessary to any misfortune that might attend her giving up the point; she there- fore continued firm, and forced Lady George to consent.

It was fortunate for her, that the perſon with whom ſhe had this conflict was ſo much a ſtranger to her temper, otherwiſe ſhe would have known herſelf perfectly ſecure from any revelation of the kind ſhe feared. Conſtance could have died rather than have made a communication of what ſhe had ſeen, and ſhe would have hated herſelf, even if all others had juſtified her, for lending her aſſiſtance to the irreparable breach it would occaſion. She was grieved for Lord George, and ſincerely pitied the innocent children; but, had ſhe ſtaid in the houſe, her efforts would have tended only to convince her patroneſs how dreadfully ſhe had deviated, and to detach her from her illicit connexion.

Lady George was now anxious to ſettle the reaſon ſhe ſhould give to her huſband for Conſtance's ſudden removal. Had not Miſs Fitzarthur been apprized of the ſcheme, ſhe could not have accounted for this ſolicitude, as it appeared a matter totally indifferent to him whether ſhe was there or elſewhere. "Shall I tell him," ſaid her ladyſhip, "that Lord Farnford and you had ſome words, "and that you inſiſted on going?" "If you "think," ſhe replied, "that ſuch a reaſon will be "accepted." "I do not know that it will," Lady George anſwered, "I am ſure he will be very "angry with me for letting you go." "Not if "he is convinced," returned Conſtance, "that "you could not prevail on me to ſtay; place it all "to the account of my obſtinacy, only tell him "I entertain

"I entertain a grateful ſenſe of the kindneſſes I "have received here." Lady George, ſeeming to grow ſtill more reluctant, Conſtance to avoid importunity, told her ſhe was reſolved, and ſhould prepare for her departure immediately; at the ſame time unlocking her trunk: her firmneſs provoked the lady, and in all the rage of diſappointment ſhe reproached her with ingratitude, and with ſlighting her friendſhip; but it was equally out of the power of malice and hypocriſy to work on Miſs Fitzarthur; ſhe ſuffered her ladyſhip to quit the room, without finding in herſelf the leaſt inclination to gratify her.

When ſhe was gone, Conſtance ſat down for a few minutes to recollect herſelf, and conſider what ſhe ſhould do. Mrs. Langrivier's ſhe thought the fitteſt place for her to retire to, as, if ſhe went to Mr. Carwell's friend, it would excite ſuſpicion, and by the preſent revolution of circumſtances it was rendered needleſs. She therefore wrote a note to her former landlady, telling her ſhe would be with her immediately, whether her lodgings were or were not occupied, and ſent it by one of the footmen, whom ſhe directed to fetch her a hackney-coach: this interval ſhe employed in getting completely ready to depart; and when ſhe was informed that the coach was at the door, and had ſent what belonged to her down ſtairs, ſhe armed herſelf with courage, and went to take leave of Lady George, whoſe diſtreſs did not ſeem diminiſhed;

ed: ſhe cried, ſhe threatened, ſhe entreated, all equally ineffectual; and Conſtance, after having thanked her for her many civilities, quitted the houſe, to return no more.

CHAP. IX.

MELANCHO

MRS. LANGRIVIER's lodgings were ſtill empty, though engaged for the week after the enſuing; but, as it was now only Tueſday, Conſtance had leiſure to look round and determine how ſhe ſhould diſpoſe ofherſelf for the remainder of the chaſm before LordReycolm's return. She wrote that evening to Mr. Carwell, informing him of her eſcape, without mentioning to what it was owing, giving him only to underſtand that ſhe had had an opportunity.

At Mrs. Langrivier's firſt leiſure ſhe came up to inquire after Miſs Fitzarthur, and to gratify her curioſity by learning why ſhe had returned. Conſtance told her in general, that Lord George Brenville's family was too irregular for any but thoſe of their own claſs to live in; and her landlady, who ſeemed to think herſelf reſponſible for the conſequences

quences of a connexion ſhe had promoted, expreſſed her ſorrow at the diſappointment in ſuch terms as would, even if ſuſpicions of her integrity had been excited, have fully acquitted her.

Conſtance's next care was to let Mr. Carwell's friend in Conduit-ſtreet know that ſhe was gone to another lodging; he had told her that he had made the application for her without giving her name, leſt it ſhould by any accident get abroad that ſhe was ſeeking a retreat; ſhe therefore ſent to her, informing her, that the lady whom Mr. Carwell had mentioned would not trouble her; and now, all her buſineſs being diſpatched, ſhe ſaw herſelf ſettled in her former habitation, with abundant leiſure for reflection.

Although her deliverance was a ſubject of rejoicing, and ſhe was very grateful for it, ſhe found the time neceſſarily ſpent alone very inimical to the maintenance of her courage. She was made ſtill more uneaſy, by the fear of a viſit from Lady George or her huſband; the one might come to renew her perſuaſions, the other to inquire why ſhe left his houſe; to prevent any embarraſſment which this might occaſion her, ſhe gave Mrs. Langrivier and her family a ſtrict injunction to deny her to every body, and on no pretence to admit any perſon to come up to her. As Lord Farnford had not avowed to her his deſign, and as ſhe had not incenſed him, ſhe flattered herſelf ſhe had no open violence to fear; and, as it was her intention to confine herſelf

ſelf wholly to the houſe, ſhe hoped ſhe was ſo fortified by her caution, and could ſo far rely on Mrs. Langrivier, as to be tolerably ſecure.

The effect of misfortune on her mind was ſuch as rendered her truly uncomfortable; ſhe had hitherto always found it poſſible to make ſolitude pleaſant, now this ability failed her; there was no kind of reading that afforded her any gratification, and when excluded from literary amuſements, to live long alone cannot but be to an improved underſtanding very dull. Formerly ſhe had received equal entertainment and inſtruction from works of ſcience, and theſe ſhe procured; but ſhe ſoon diſcovered, that whatever required attention diſtracted her; ſhe then tried the lighter claſs of writers, with no better ſucceſs;—

'They that could once the war of thought controul,
And baniſh diſcord from the jarring ſoul,
Now irritate the mind they us'd to heal.'

Whatever tended to excite mirth, was painful to her; and that which was melancholy, while it ſuited her diſpoſition and ſoothed her, ſo enervated her, that ſhe was obliged to give it up, convinced that though the draught was delicious it was noxious. Her averſion to muſic was now as great as her fondneſs for it had been; ſhe tried drawing, and found it inſipid; needle-work was therefore her only reſource, and even of this ſhe found her moſt favourite ſpecies diſguſting; embroidery required

too great an exertion, and had too much gaiety in it; but ſhe could make a muſlin apron, or hem a dozen yards of cambrick, and be amuſed with it: ſhe knew that idleneſs was her greateſt enemy, and therefore, as it was impoſſible to fill up her many vacant hours, by employing them for herſelf, and ſhe had no friend whom her induſtry could be uſeful to, ſhe would frequently work for Mrs. Langrivier: ſhe continued to ſit alone, and, finding company grow every day more irkſome to her, ſhe paſſed even her meals in ſolitude.

Aware that on herſelf alone ſhe depended for comfort, and on the approbation of her conſcience for every ſatisfaction, ſhe was indefatigable in her endeavours to increaſe her fortitude and prudence; the latter was adequate to the call for it, her reaſon was unclouded, ſhe had no attachment to any principle, excepting that of rectitude; and, having never ſet her heart on the felicities of this world, regretted little the privation of them. Her income was ſufficient to inſure her againſt want; ſhe hoped Lord Reycolm's return would afford her the bleſſing of a friend; and gratefully acknowledged, that if her misfortunes exceeded in magnitude thoſe of others, the education ſhe had received had enabled her to bear them proportionably better. She could reflect with calmneſs on moſt of the calamities ſhe had undergone; the loſs of her fortune was with her a ſmall evil; the death of her relations, particularly that of her mother, was a cauſe of pungent

ſorrow ſtill, but all her complaints ended in ſubmiſſion; ſhe revered the chaſtening hand, and ſhe was convinced a longer continuance of life would have been to Lady Barbara a procraſtination of happineſs. On theſe ſubjects ſhe reaſoned philoſophically; but philoſophy was no medicine for her greateſt affliction: to apply it, reflection was indiſpenſably neceſſary, and this was intolerable.—Lord Calorne's conduct was the mortal ſtab to her peace; and there had never been a moment ſince ſhe heard Miſs Greyburne's ſtory, in which a thought recurring to him, would not ſink her to deſpondency: he was perpetually, ſleeping or waking, preſent to her eyes; his voice often ſounded in her ears, and ſhe would involuntarily ſtart from her chair, terrified at ſhe knew not what. She found this grow upon her, and that after her thoughts had been for an hour or two otherwiſe occupied, either by employment or by having Mrs. Langrivier with her, it returned more forcibly: as it rendered her very exiſtence burthenſome, and kept her in a continual ſtate of low ſpirits, ſhe often reſolved to face the ſpectre, and, inſtead of endeavouring to baniſh it, to reaſon with herſelf on the folly of ſuffering any thing ideal to add to her ſubſtantial misfortunes; but nothing ſhe did was at all effectual, nor could her arraying all ſhe had heard againſt him in the moſt lively colours, aſſiſt her: her abhorrence of vice, and of *his* vice, was as great as ever; ſhe did not wiſh ſhe had continued

nued deceived; on the contrary, she rejoiced in having rejected the offer he had made her; yet all concluded with—Why was he less deserving than he seemed to be?

Mr. Carwell answered her letter on the day that Lord and Lady George Brenville reached their country seat; and she received it on Saturday: she found by it, that her Ladyship had invented an excuse that had imposed on her husband and on Mr. Carwell. It was, that on the Sunday evening Miss Fitzarthur had desired to sit in another room, instead of coming into the drawing-room; that, going to speak to her, she saw Lord Farnford with her, who had drank so immoderately, as to forget the necessity of concealing his design; that he had discovered enough of it to render Miss Fitzarthur suspicious; and that, on that account, she had peremptorily insisted on leaving the house. Mr. Carwell, in the next paragraph, expressed his surprize that Constance, when she last saw him, did not mention such an opportunity as this had offered her; but seemed to rest satisfied, that either it had not then occurred to her that she might avail herself of it, or, if it had, that she had forgotten it.

She had now entered on the last week of her abode at Mrs. Langrivier's, and had not determined whither to go. On the Monday morning she sent for her landlady, and told her, that as it might be some time before her friends came from France, she must seek another habitation; and that she wished

her to look out for her. Mrs. Langrivier was very unwilling to part with her, and regretted her having let the lodgings; but, ſaid ſhe, it is only this floor that I have engaged, and my woman ſhall work in the fore-parlour, if the back-parlour and a bed-chamber on the ſecond floor would ſuit you. This appeared an eligible propoſal, till ſhe inquired who was to ſucceed her in her preſent apartment; when hearing it was a young gentleman of great fortune and high faſhion, that which would have been an inducement with many women in her circumſtances to ſtay, was with her an unſurmountable objection, and ſhe preferred the diſagreeable alternative.

The poſt that day brought her a letter from Lord Reycolm, and ſhe regarded it as an arrival doubly fortunate. It came at a time when nothing elſe could enable her to form any plan; and ſhe did not doubt it would fix that of their ſetting out. Nobody was more cautious than herſelf, of admitting ill-founded hopes; but here was neither need nor room for circumſpection: aggravated then was her mortification, when the firſt lines informed her that her two friends, on account of a very dangerous illneſs of Lady Reycolm's mother, had been obliged to return with all poſſible expedition to Paris: and that Madame Bermond being in ſome meaſure recovered, change of air, and a journey to a remote part of the kingdom, had been adviſed; which, as ſhe would not ſuffer her daughter to quit her, muſt detain them from England till he feared

it

it would be too late for his wife to venture prudently on the ſea. His letter, which was brief and written in haſte, nevertheleſs contained aſſurances of his happineſs, commendations of his Adelaide, and the warmeſt expreſſions of regard for Conſtance. Sorry conſolation! and by no means compenſating for this ſevere ſtroke.

Every hope now withered, and ſhe was wholly dead to every conſideration but this. She told Mrs. Langrivier of her diſappointment; but ſhe was unable to aſſiſt or adviſe; ſhe could only lament with her, and promiſe, that whatever was in her power to relieve her, ſhe would do. After having ruminated on it all night, ſhe reſolved on writing to Mr. Carwell immediately, and put it in execution. She firſt anſwered his expreſſions of wonder at her omitting to mention Lord Farnford's communication, by telling him that the reaſon Lady George aſſigned was a falſe one, that ſhe had made her promiſe never to reveal what it really was, and intimated that this ſecrecy was proper. She then unfolded to him her diſtreſs, and begged to know what ſhe had beſt do, laying before him the ſeveral plans ſhe had contemplated previous to her acquaintance with his family, and honeſtly telling him the objections ſhe had both to ſtaying in town and returning to Marſtonbury.

CHAP. X.

CONCEALMENT.

HER anxiety, which was now ſcarcely to be borne patiently, was relieved, at the return of the poſt, by a letter from Mr. Carwell, in which, after having condoled with and encouraged her, and given her his opinion, he ſaid,

'As you cannot ſtay longer than the expiration of this week where you are, it is neceſſary you ſhould, without delay, fix on ſome place of reſidence; and to find one *proper* for Miſs Fitzarthur, muſt be a work of time and difficulty; all we muſt at preſent look for is, a place of ſecurity; and this I flatter myſelf is within the ſcope of my ability to promiſe you. Mrs. Heſham, with whom I had provided you a retreat, will, I am certain, be happy in receiving you; and with her I will pledge my life for your ſafety: ſhe is the widow of a clergyman, and near ſixty years of age: her family conſiſts only of herſelf and an old ſervant; ſhe lives on an annuity, which is enough for her wants, and has not been accuſtomed to let any part of her houſe. You might, if it is agreeable to you, board with her, and I am perſuaded you will be pleaſed with her; ſhe has known viciſſitudes of fortune, is well acquainted with

with the world, and has improved a more than tolerable ſhare of common ſenſe, by reading and good company. I write to her by this poſt, preſuming, it may be too raſhly, that you will think as I do, to apprize her, that ſhe may probably have an application from you: if it does not meet your wiſhes, it will be no injury to her, and I beg you will in that caſe decline it.

'From what you have communicated to me of your affairs, I think you are in danger only from Lord Farnford: his courage may by this time be cooled; but he is never to be truſted. I hope, however, I can fence you againſt him. When I mentioned you to Mrs. Heſham, I ſaid no more than that it was for a young lady of family and reſpectable connections, that I aſked her aſſiſtance; for, not knowing how matters might end, I did not chuſe to put it in the power of any body to make your name common; and I thought when you came to her, it would be time enough to tell her who you were. This caution I have, in the letter I have juſt finiſhed writing to her, ſtill obſerved; and will tell you my reaſon for doing ſo. To avoid being haunted either by Lord Farnford or any other troubleſome perſon; and as you have ſaid you have no connections in town, I would adviſe your concealing your name. You will ſay—How is this poſſible?—I will ſhew you:—By the billet you favoured me with in Groſvenor-ſtreet, I learn, that you have two Chriſtian names, and that one of them might

paſs very well for a French ſirname; if you drop that of Fitzarthur, and aſſume that of Conſtance, taking your other for a Chriſtian name, you will not offend againſt truth, and it will ſecure you from notice, which I am ſure you do not wiſh to attract. —Matilda Conſtance may enjoy pleaſures which *Lord Farnford's Miſs Fitzarthur* muſt be excluded from. As I have acted, I have done nothing that can oblige you to tell Mrs. Heſham who you really are; but in this and all other caſes wherein I adviſe you, an appeal lies to your own judgment, and that cannot deceive you. On the propriety of adopting or rejecting this propoſition, you may deliberate: to one I have yet to make, I muſt beg an immediate anſwer.

'I went the other day to pay a viſit to Mr. Gaynham, who is come for a ſhort time into this neighbourhood; an old ſchool-fellow, whom I have not ſeen many years, and for whom I ſhall ever entertain the ſincereſt regard. In the courſe of an evening's converſation, he mentioned his wife, whom I muſt tell you, he ſtole from her father's, though under the moſt extenuating circumſtances; ſhe is a woman of quality, but of what family I know not, nor have I ever ſeen her: he ſpoke of her in ſuch terms as awakened my attention; her virtues were a topic he liked to dwell on; and he excited in me a wiſh, that, for your ſake, Lady George Brenville had deſerved ſuch a character. This wiſh, as he knew Lady George, I uttered, and ſaid it

was

was out of pity for one, who merited the utmoſt exertions of benevolence, and whom ſhe had uſed very ill. I then, without mentioning names or the particular circumſtances of your treatment, repreſented to him the difficulties of an expoſed and friendleſs ſituation, and thoſe I found in adviſing you. In ſhort, Madam, half an hour's converſation ſo intereſted him for you, that he voluntarily ſaid, every one who wiſhed to encourage virtue, ought to make your cauſe their own; that, ſo cenſorious as the world was, he, though a married man, dare not offer his ſervice to you; but that his wife would, he was ſure, think herſelf inexpreſſibly happy in affording you any ſupport or countenance. I thanked him for you, and promiſed to inform you of his kindneſs. He deſired me to write as ſoon as I could, to make you an offer of any thing in his or Lady Harriet's power, and to know whether it would be agreeable to you that ſhe ſhould call on you when ſhe returns to town, which will be about the middle of next week; for that if ſo he ſhould, as ſhe is on a viſit to a relation at a diſtance from him, write immediately to her. I muſt therefore trouble you to give me your ſentiments on this buſineſs, which I hope will be productive of comfort to you; but I will not miſlead you; my knowledge of Lady Harriet is, as you will perceive, merely from report, and that, perhaps, of a too partial huſband. Thus much I can anſwer for, that Mr. Gaynham has always borne a very reſpectable character, and I

know him to be a man of principle, benevolence, and underſtanding; he ſays his wife is a very domeſtic woman, that his family is of the moſt regular kind, and that his greateſt pleaſures are reſident at his home.

'I am the more anxious to procure you ſome agreeable connection as I ſhall probably be ſhortly removed far from you. My acquieſcence, has ſo won Lord George's favour, that he, not ſuſpecting it was I who defeated the ſcheme, has allowed me to ſpend three months in Scotland, and has enabled me to defray the expences of my journey. I cannot go happy if I leave you in a precarious ſituation, nor would Mrs. Carwell ſuffer me to ſtay with her if ſhe knew that it made Miſs Fitzarthur in the leaſt degree more uneaſy.

'That it may pleaſe God to preſerve you, to comfort you, and to deliver you from all your troubles, is a wiſh that can never be abſent from the heart of,

'Dear Madam,

'Your ſincere friend,

'and very humble ſervant,

'B. CARWELL.'

She felt herſelf much relieved by this letter, and anſwered it, without loſs of time, gratefully acknowledging and accepting the obligations conferred in it, and offering, if furniſhed with a letter recommending her to Lady Harriet Gaynham's protection, to wait on her with it. The propoſal of ſuppreſſing her name

name at first ſtartled her; but ſhe ſoon ſaw the prudence of the meaſure, and though ſhe diſliked whatever had the appearance of diſguiſe, ſhe was aware it would be attended with advantages, and acquieſced in it. She was very glad that in the meſſage ſhe had ſent to Mrs. Heſham on her leaving Lord George Brenville's, ſhe had only deſcribed herſelf as *the Lady for whom Mr. Carwell applied*; ſo that ſhe had not thwarted the ſcheme, and ſhe was now to ſet out, as it were, a-new, in the world, as Matilda Conſtance; to make new connections, and to move in an orbit much beneath that ſhe was originally placed in.

She thought it would be prudent to make Mrs. Langrivier acquainted with this ſtep, and her intended remove to Mrs. Heſham's; and to engage her to take in her letters, as ſhe could not bring herſelf to a reſolution of informing thoſe with whom ſhe correſponded of the neceſſity ſhe was driven to. She did not diſcover any impediment to her following Mr. Carwell's advice, nor could it be attended with danger, as it was only he and Mrs. Langrivier that would know her by two names: her relations gave her no trouble, and they were the only people likely to make particular inquiries. Mrs. Stavenell ſhe had not ſeen, excepting accidentally in paſſing her carriage, while with Lady George Brenville, ſince ſhe gave her her diſmiſſion.

Mr. Stavenell, whoſe preſence now would have been infinitely ſerviceable to her, was ſtill abroad,

and likely to continue ſo, and theſe were her only relations, excepting Lord Drumferne's family.—The conſideration that thoſe were ſtrangers to her from whom ſhe muſt expect aſſiſtance, was unpleaſant; yet, cheriſhing hope, ſhe endeavoured to keep from ſinking: the coolneſs of her uncle's behaviour, who never did more for her than the fear of cenſure for want of concern for her urged him to, though it was a misfortune, and his ſhewing any cordiality towards her might have ſpared her much of what ſhe had ſuffered, neither excited her ſorrow or reſentment; ſhe knew ſhe could not confer a greater favour on him than that of preſerving the diſtance between them, he therefore was a total ſtranger, to her ſituation. From Lord Reycolm ſhe was convinced, all that benevolence and friendſhip for her could do, ſhe might obtain; but removed ſo far from her, how could he aſſiſt her? to communicate her diſtreſs to him, would have been only to make him a participant in it; and there was nothing ſhe more ſedulouſly ſhunned, that was not criminal, than the making others uſeleſsly unhappy.

Thus deſerted by her relatives, ſhe had no aſſurance but that whatever friendſhip was ſhewn her, would be voluntary; ſhe had no ſecurity againſt fraud and deceit ſtronger than her own ſagacity, nor any hope of avoiding it, greater than aroſe from the reflection that her ſituation was too low to make it the intereſt of any one to impoſe on her.—But her reaſon bid her perſevere; it taught her that the

the privation of evil is poſitive good; to accept gratefully the protection heaven had hitherto afforded her, and to truſt that it would be continued to her.

CHAP. XI.

CAUTION

IN a few hours after the arrival of Mr. Carwell's letter, ſhe made her landlady, as far as was neceſſary, her confidante, and ſecured her willing concurrence. On the morning of the next day, being Saturday, having dreſſed herſelf with the utmoſt caution, and concealed all ſhe could of her face under a very large cap, ſhe went in a hackney-coach to Mrs. Heſham's, in Conduit-ſtreet; and found her at home and alone: the awkwardneſs of a firſt interview was leſſened by Mr. Carwell's having prepared his friend to ſee Conſtance, who now began to inquire whether her immediate admiſſion would be perfectly convenient, and on what terms ſhe could become a part of the family. Mrs. Heſham's anſwers, though delivered with civility, were tardy and

and brief; and it was evident that the overture did not pleaſe her. What was Conſtance now to do? She was driven to the laſt day of her ſtay at Mrs. Langrivier's, and ſhe had reaſon to believe this houſe would not be her aſylum. She yet tried, by candour and ingenuouſly deſcribing her ſituation, to win on Mrs. Heſham, who, notwithſtanding all her endeavours, retreated ſtill farther. She ſaid ſhe had never let lodgings, or taken in boarders, and that therefore her houſe might not be ſo convenient as thoſe which were always ready for the reception of ſtrangers; that ſhe had but one ſervant; and that perhaps her taking a perſon in to board, would oblige her to change, which would be very diſagreeable,

To the firſt of theſe objections, Conſtance replied, that ſhe did not look for convenience; that, as Mrs. Heſham went out of her way, to accommodate her, any deficiency could be aſcribed only to herſelf; and to the ſecond, that ſhe required no attendance, and would recompence any additional trouble ſhe might occaſion.—This had no effect; Mrs. Heſham was ſtill averſe, and now manifeſted her diſlike, by adviſing her to ſee ſome lodgings on the oppoſite ſide of the way, which were empty.

The colour roſe in Conſtance's cheeks, at this rejection, and the unexpected diſappointment brought tears into her eyes; ſhe told Mrs. Heſham ſhe very ill underſtood the difficulties ſhe laboured under, if ſhe imagined it poſſible for her to ſeek a habitation at a venture; that what ſhe looked for was only pro-

protection and tranquillity; and that Mr. Carwell had assured her here she would meet with both; that she was informed she had been engaged to receive her; and must beg to know, what her objection was really founded on. She could not for some time get an answer; Mrs. Hesham sat looking at her, and silent: she repeated her request, but received no more satisfactory a reply, than, that the admission of a lodger would derange her family, and finally, that she could not do it.

So mortifying a repulse would, in all circumstances, have been felt; in Constance's it was a severe affliction: she rose from her seat, and would have apologized for the trouble she had given; but her heart was too full, and she burst into tears.—Mrs. Hesham attended her to the street-door, and there, as if moved by her distress, told her, that though she could not receive her herself, she could, she believed, recommend her to those that would. Eager to catch at whatever offered, she returned with her to the parlour, and inquired where she could accommodate her. There is, said she, a few doors off, a widow woman, of character, that lets her house; I do not think she has more than one bed-chamber to spare just now, which perhaps, as you would board with her, would be sufficient for you.—And who are her lodgers? Constance asked. —People, answered Mrs. Hesham, that would not come in your way; one is a gentleman, that takes the first floor by the year, and never eats at home; another is an India Captain, lately come over; and she

ſhe has only one more, a young gentleman in the guards; but he ſeldom comes there till night, and only ſtays till noon; ſo that, excepting accidentally on the ſtairs, you may never ſee them.—This will not do indeed, ſaid Conſtance: I might ſtay where I am, if I did not diſlike being in a houſe with other lodgers; it would be very imprudent and very diſagreeable. As you do not chuſe to receive me, I know not what to do. I wiſh you would tell me your objection, perhaps I might remove it; and it really would be charity to wave trifling obſtacles.

Come, replied Mrs. Heſham, ſhutting the door, I will tell you, I will not do any thing unkind: and I am ſorry to ſee you unhappy; but I would not take ſuch a lady into my houſe for five hundred a year.—And why not? cried Conſtance, ſtarting with ſurprize; is there any thing in my appearance that frights you? or what do you ſuſpect? do you think Mr. Carwell would recommend a perſon to you from whom you could apprehend danger?—You and I, Miſs, ſaid Mrs. Heſham, are ſtrangers to each other; and I can only judge from appearances; I ſuſpect nothing, nor have I any objection, except to your perſon: you are, to tell you the truth, much too handſome for me to be eaſy with having you.—I know what would be the conſequence of your living here; and though, I do not doubt your prudence, as you muſt own there never was a time when London was a worſe air for beauty

and

and virtue, you muſt not be angry at my caution. I have ſeen a great deal of the world, but the increaſing depravity of the preſent riſing generation, aſtoniſhes me: vice is now patronized, and its emiſſaries are perpetually prowling, in theſe and the adjacent neighbourhoods, for prey; you cannot live without ever being ſeen; and I am ſure a glimpſe of you would bring me ſuch a viſitor, as *I* am not well-bred enough to think an honour.

Conſtance was not the firſt woman that was ever brought to own beauty a misfortune: ſhe was pleaſed with Mrs. Heſham's circumſpection; but ſhe was ſo convinced, by her care, that her's was of all others, the houſe where ſhe ſhould be moſt properly fixed, that her reluctance to ſubmit to her refuſal, increaſed.—You would not, I am ſure, ſaid ſhe, make my ſtanding, more than the generality of the world, in need of protection, a reaſon for withholding it; and I aſſure you, my conduct ſhall never give you uneaſineſs. If you knew my misfortunes, you would entertain no apprehenſions. If you pleaſe, Mrs. Langrivier, whom I am now with, ſhall ſatisfy any queries you will put to her; ſhe can tell you that I ſee nobody; that till to-day I have not quitted her houſe ſince I went to her at the beginning of laſt week; and that I live retired, as much from inclination as neceſſity. Do not then let what it has pleaſed God to beſtow on me, be a reaſon for rejecting me. I will entirely be governed by

by you; and whenever you ſee any thing to diſapprove, will leave your houſe.

Mrs. Heſham now heſitated; ſhe ſeemed unwilling to refuſe, and yet afraid to conſent: her wavering gave Conſtance hopes, and by every argument ſhe could uſe ſhe tried to prevail. The victory was at length her's, and the difficulty of obtaining it conſiderably increaſed it's value and her confidence, ſince ſhe could not doubt of her ſecurity with one ſo laudably and ſo diſintereſtedly cautious. Preliminaries were ſoon ſettled when her acquieſcence was procured; it was agreed that ſhe ſhould come to her that evening, and when aſked for her name gave that of Miſs Conſtance.

She now flattered herſelf that ſhe might enjoy peace, if ſhe could allay the conſuming fire in her own boſom: to exert her utmoſt reſolution for this purpoſe ſhe conſidered as a duty ſhe muſt unequivocally diſcharge, as it would be cruel to diſturb Mrs. Heſham's tranquillity by ſuffering her melancholly to appear, and it was weakneſs to yield to an enemy whom it required nothing more than courage to defeat.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

CORDIALITY.

IN the duſk of the evening ſhe left Mrs. Langrivier's, and went to her new habitation: ſhe was pleaſed with obſerving, that Mrs. Heſham, after having conſented to admit her into her houſe, had ſhaken off all diſtruſt, and ſeemed anxious only for her accommodation, as this was an argument, of good temper, and of her being free from ſuſpicious prejudices; her behaviour during the firſt evening, proved her deſerving of what Mr. Carwell had ſaid of her; and, by the time they were to go to their repoſe, they ſeemed ſorry to part.

A tolerable night's reſt diſpelled a little of the gloom on Conſtance's mind, and ſhe met her landlady at breakfaſt with pleaſure. As ſhe was determined, at all events, to humour her in every thing till ſhe had convinced her ſhe had no reaſon to be uneaſy, ſhe did not venture to propoſe going to church, leſt ſhe ſhould conclude ſhe diſliked confinement; but Mrs. Heſham ſignifying her intention of going herſelf to the neighbouring chapel, Conſtance aſked if ſhe thought there would be any impropriety in her accompanying her. She anſwered that

that there was none, and that ſhe ſhould be happy in having her with her.

Whatever Conſtance thought would contribute to her ſatisfaction ſhe did, and with all poſſible care avoided every thing that could make her repent her having yielded to her importunity. She lived in a ſtate of tranquillity equally removed from buſtle and dullneſs. Mrs. Heſham was of a very chearful diſpoſition, and frequently amuſed her by reading aloud to her, and ſhe found with a very reaſonable degree of ſatisfaction, that her oppoſition to the melancholy that had ſeized her, though it did not eradicate, leſſened it.

As ſoon as ſhe was ſettled, ſhe wrote to Mr. Carwell, and told him how agreeable he had fixed her; and, on the fifth day after her removal, ſhe received a meſſage, addreſſed to her by her Chriſtian name only, from Lady Harriet Gaynham, deſiring to know when ſhe might moſt conveniently call on her. Conſtance anſwered this civility by ſaying ſhe ſhould be happy to ſee her Ladyſhip at any time, and, if ſhe would give her leave, ſhe would ſpare her the trouble of coming, by waiting on her. Lady Harriet ſent back word that ſhe would drink tea with her that evening; and Conſtance, with a mixture of fear and pleaſure, went into the beſt room, which was prepared to receive her, fortifying her mind, as well as poſſible, againſt being caught by appearances.

About seven, Lady Harriet Gaynham, the first visitor she had seen in the house, came, in her morning dress, on foot; and entered the room with a letter in her hand; which, as soon as she was seated, she gave to Constance, and desired her to read: it was from Mr. Carwell to her Ladyship, explaining in general terms, the necessity in which she for whom he interested himself, stood of some defence from reproach and insult, and begging her, by favouring her with as much of her countenance as she should be found to merit, to shield her from the dangers she was exposed to. In this letter was inclosed one from him to Constance, in which he enformed her of Mr. Gaynham's kindness in writing immediately to Lady Harriet, and expediting her return to town, and recommended it to her to accept the protection offered her.

When she had read these letters, and returned one of them, Lady Harriet said,—And now, Miss Constance, I am come to fulfill what has been promised for me, and to tell you how happy I am in being chosen as the means to avert any of the evils you fear. From what I have learned of your situation, it appears very ill suited to you, and in any method which you can point out to me, by which I can relieve it, you may depend on my assistance.

However, Constance had resolved against being captivated at first sight; it was impossible for her to remain unprejudiced in Lady Harriet's favour; her coun-

countenance indicated her being between twenty and twenty-three years of age, and was expreſſive of the moſt amiable ſweetneſs; her perſon was elegant, though not ſhowy, and there was, in the whole of her deportment, ſomething ſo innocently chearful, ſo ingenious, and yet ſo diffident, that Conſtance could not forbear conſidering her exterior as the archetype of a mind in the moſt enviable ſtate of tranquillity.

She inquired of Conſtance what plan ſhe thought of purſuing, and was anſwered, that unleſs any accident happened to make her removal neceſſary, ſhe purpoſed remaining where ſhe was till her relations came from abroad; but that if her ladyſhip ſaw any impropriety in her doing ſo, ſhe wiſhed to know it, and would follow her advice. "I am "extremely ſorry," Lady Harriet replied, "that "our acquaintance is now to begin; before I ad- "viſe you, I would have you judge what credit "is to be given to my opinion; your ſituation "juſtifies *me* in attaching myſelf to *you*, but there "is no obligation on you to follow the perhaps "erroneous advice of one whoſe right and ability "are equally queſtionable. Of one point, however, "you muſt be convinced before I go farther, that "however I may err in my judgment, my utmoſt "power to ſerve you is at your command: I ac- "cepted the office aſſigned me from a general de- "ſire to promote happineſs; it is now matter of "perſonal choice; and though I fear you will "find

" find little more advantage from meeting with me,
" than that of having a nominal protectreſs, if that
" can be of any ſervice to you, you may uſe it in
" the fulleſt extent."

Two hours ſlid away imperceptibly in the moſt agreeable converſation. Lady Harriet appeared highly deſerving of whatever commendations Mr. Gaynham had beſtowed on her, and Conſtance ſaw her with regret preparing to go; when ſhe ſaid ſhe was ſorry her ladyſhip had made her viſit ſo ſhort, ſhe anſwered;—" I am ſorry to leave you,
" becauſe in your ſolitude any relief of converſa-
" tion is deſirable; but," ſaid ſhe, ſmiling, " to
" tell you ingeniouſly the fact, I have a little lady,
" four months old, at home, who will admit of no
" excuſe for the loſs of her ſupper; ſhe is a moſt
" deſpotic tyrant, and frequently makes me quit
" very agreeable friends to attend her."

The addition of maternal tenderneſs to Lady Harriet's character, completed Conſtance's opinion of her, and made her ſtill more reluctantly part with her. Before ſhe took her leave, ſhe ſaid,—
" And when may I hope to ſee you? I am in a ſtate
" of widowhood, now Mr. Gaynham is abſent; we
" muſt each relieve the other; are you engaged
" for to-morrow?" Conſtance replied, that ſhe had no engagements, nor any objection but the fear of putting her ladyſhip to inconvenience: ' If,' ſaid ſhe, ' I might be honoured with knowing ' any time when you ſhall be at home, and other-

wiſe

'wife quite alone, I would with great pleafure 'wait on you.' "You think, I fuppofe," returned Lady Harriet, "that I am as much engaged "as Lady George Brenville; but indeed I am not "half fo fine a lady; I love home and my family; "and though I dare fay Lady George and her ac- "quaintance would call me ftupid for thinking fo, "and a downright fool for faying fo, I am not "aſhamed to own, that I have never yet found "any pleaſures ſo ſatisfactory as thoſe of a domeſtic "life: you will perhaps ſet me down for an old- "faſhioned creature, when I tell you, I prefer "nurſing my little girl, aud teaching her brother "his alphabet, to half the amuſements of London; "that I do not love cards, and that the greateſt "part of my viſitors are ſuch as I receive without "ceremony, and who do not innterrupt any em- "ployment I am engaged in." Conſtance replied, that theſe ſentiments were ſuch as ſhe ever wiſhed to entertain, and that ſhe was ſo far from thinking her attachment to her family a ſubject of ridicule, that ſhe was rejoiced in finding one, to whom ſhe was to owe her protection, ſo highly rational.

Lady Harriet now urged her to ſpend the next day with her, and added, "I ſee no reaſon why, "for the ſake of ceremony, we are to be debarred "from the pleaſure of meeting often; therefore, "if it is convenient to you, I ſhall expect to ſee "you to breakfaſt as near ten o'clock as ſuits you. "Do not let the fear of interrupting me keep you

"away,

"away, you will be no reſtraint on me; and I "aſſure you I ſhall be very happy to have your "company." 'May I aſk,'—ſaid Conſtance,—'whether you would otherwiſe be quite alone? 'for indeed my unfortunate ſituation is ſuch, that 'I wiſh not to be ſeen.' "I ſhall be quite alone," replied her ladyſhip; "and, to make you perfectly "eaſy, will promiſe that you ſhall ſee nobody but "myſelf." The dictates of caution and the experience of Lady George Brenville, were reaſons too weak to make Conſtance ſuſpicious; Lady Harriet told her ſhe lived no farther off than New Burlington-ſtreet, and offered, if the weather was fine to ſend her footman to fetch her, or, in caſe of rain, her chair; and her invitation was accepted.

Immediately as Lady Harriet was gone, Conſtance communicated to Mrs. Heſham what had paſſed, and was happy in her approbation, and in being told by her, that having accidentally met with a perſon who had ſome knowledge of Mr. Gaynham's family, ſhe had made inquiries reſpecting them, and had heard a very ſatisfactory account of them.

CHAP. XIII.

PEACE.

BETWEEN nine and ten o'clock the next morning, Lady Harriet Gaynham's footman came for her. Conſtance ſet out to enter on this new acquaintance, and having reached the houſe, was ſhewn into a parlour in which there was nobody. After a few minutes a meſſage came to her, deſiring that if it was not too much trouble, ſhe would go up ſtairs, and accordingly ſhe followed the ſervant to the nurſery, where a lovely picture was exhibited, Lady Harriet having her little girl aſleep on her lap, and a fine boy in petticoats ſtanding by her. She apologized for obliging Conſtance to come to her; "But," ſaid ſhe, "I did not like to make "you wait, and I am ſure you would have been "more angry at my waking my child, than at this "trouble." In about a quarter of an hour Lady Harriet was releaſed, and Conſtance, with ſentiments of increaſing eſteem and admiration, went with her to breakfaſt.

The houſe, which was exquiſitely neat, was handſomely not gaudily furniſhed, and in every thing there appeared regularity and decency, ſteering equally between the extremes of profuſion and arſimony. At noon the coach was ordered for an airing;

airing; before three they returned; Lady Harriet went to dreſs, and ſent her children to Conſtance to amuſe her during her abſence; at four they dined, and the evening was agreeably ſpent in converſation, in work, and muſic.

Her new friend ſeemed deſirous to make Conſtance acquainted with her diſpoſition by the ſhorteſt means poſſible, and it might naturally be ſuppoſed that ſhe expected in return an equal degree of unreſerve; but Conſtance now with pain recollected that ſhe muſt uſe concealment; ſhe hoped, however, that a little time would take away this neceſſity; for, if Lady Harriet was what ſhe appeared to be, there could be no reaſon for repreſſing her inclination to be candid; but prudence yet obliged her to be careful: her ladyſhip was not inquiſitive, and a hint that her misfortunes were too recent to be contemplated, ſatisfied her.

A week was ſpent in an aſſiduous cultivation of this friendſhip, and its effects were highly ſalutary to Conſtance; her home was pleaſant to her, and Mrs. Heſham's conduct demonſtrated her affection for her: memory was now her only ſource of affliction, and this ſhe endeavoured to leſſen by looking forward to the advantages ſhe might reap from two connections, the one ſo uſeful, the other ſo gratifying to her. To diminiſh theſe bleſſings, or her ſenſibility of them, by an uſeleſs retroſpect, ſhe thought ingratitude; and always making her actions conform to her opinion, ſhe found, that though

the cauſe of her melancholy remained in full force, it might and ought to be counterbalanced. Inſtead therefore of indulging it, ſhe fled from it, and from herſelf; never ſitting alone but when ſhe was too fully employed to be aware that ſhe was ſo, nor ever ſuffering her thoughts to dwell on that ſubject which had uniformly proved the bane of every enjoyment. Though Lady Harriet Gaynham and Mrs. Heſham were the whole of her ſociety, ſhe felt no deficiency; ſome part of each day was ſpent in Burlington-ſtreet, and as the engagements of the former were few, and ſhe herſelf had none, much of their time paſſed together. Their tempers and inclinations ſeemed exactly to coincide; their accompliſhments were equal; there was a very ſmall difference in their ages; and they appeared as if deſtined for the intimacy forming between them.

Conſtance intended in her next letter to Mr. Carwell to aſk his permiſſion to unboſom herſelf to Lady Harriet, for ſhe found the reſtraint grow very unpleaſant, and every time ſhe was addreſſed by the ſurname ſhe had aſſumed, ſhe felt a pang, and a conſciouſneſs that ſhe was acting in a maſk: beſides this inconvenience, it prevented their union from being ſo cloſe as it would otherwiſe have been, for ſhe could not expect confidence to be placed in her while ſhe was reſerved, nor could ſhe blame though ſhe obſerved Lady Harriet's caution in ſpeaking of her own affairs: neither yet knew who

the

the other was, and the reflection that she was dissembling was as painful, as the circumspection she was obliged to use lest she should betray herself was fettering.

But it was only from her own feelings that she suffered; Lady Harriet expressed neither resentment nor curiosity, and only indicated that she expected a more intimate acquaintance at some future time, by commending the prudence of caution, and the hazard of placing implicit confidence prematurely: had she been herself communicative, she would have embarrassed her friend, but the only facts Constance knew respecting her were, that she had no mother, that her father was living, and that she had a brother, of whom she seemed very fond, and who was now in the country: who her family were she did not discover; it was only her appellation that shewed their rank to be above that of commoners; and, as Mr. Carwell had hinted that her marriage with Mr. Gaynham was stolen, she thought she too might wish for concealment, and was therefore particularly averse to being inquisitive.

Mr. Gaynham's return to town was shortly expected, and Constance could not entirely stifle the apprehension that this would lessen her pleasure, as she could not hope that Lady Harriet would devote so much of her time then to her; she rejoiced in the approach of this event, because it gratified one to whom she wished every blessing, though she considered it as unfortunate for herself, and feared

that ſhe had already paſſed the zenith of her felicity; her frequent viſits ſhe foreſaw would now be interruptions, and ſhe determined to decline reiterated invitations.

When ſhe was one evening with Lady Harriet, a letter came from Mr. Gaynham, ſignifying his intention of dining at home the next day; and a part of it which her ladyſhip read aloud, very politely expreſſed a wiſh, that he might at his return find her new friend with her. She could not therefore avoid being there then, and ſhe felt a very high ſatisfaction in witneſſing this meeting. The manly affection and tenderneſs which Mr. Gaynham diſcovered for Lady Harriet, his eagerneſs to ſee his children, and the reception his careſſes met with, impreſſed on Conſtance's mind the opinion, that this family enjoyed domeſtic felicity in its utmoſt extent; and the cordiality with which he commenced his acquaintance with her, encouraged her to hope a continuation of her happineſs was by no means incompatible with his return home. In this ſhe had no reaſon, during the remainder of the day, to think herſelf miſtaken; the only difference it made was the addition of very agreeable converſation, he manifeſted equal intereſt with his wife for her welfare, and ſhe was not ſuffered to depart without promiſing to return the next morning.

The circumſtance in her ſituation which gave her the moſt concern now, was the ſuſpicion that on her account Lady Harriet refuſed invitations and engage-

engagements ; ſhe had been preſent when ſhe had, more than once, excuſed herſelf ; and, conſidering this as an injury to her benefactreſs, Conſtance when ſhe urged her to come, told her how uneaſy this made her. Lady Harriet laughed at her, and ſaid ſhe would take care not to diſoblige ; but that ſhe was very well pleaſed at being able to ſay truly ſhe was engaged, when ſhe was invited to make a party to any public place ; for, ſaid ſhe, when I can be ſo happy at home, why ſhould I ſeek pleaſure abroad ? This did not ſatisfy Conſtance, who choſe rather to forego a part of her enjoyment, than to ſubject her to ſuch obvious inconveniencies ; for, beſide the confinement that ſhe obliged her to, the neceſſity of her keeping out of the ſight of ſtrangers frequently put Lady Harriet to difficulty, though ſhe never would own it. To carry her reſolution into practice immediately was not poſſible ; no excuſe would be accepted inſtead of her at the breakfaſt-table the next morning, but the concern ſhe diſcovered prevailed on Lady Harriet to confeſs that ſhe had an invitation to dinner on the morrow, which, to relieve Miſs Conſtance's anxiety, ſhe would accept.

The following day, when the two ladies were alone, Lady Harriet began a converſation, which ſeemed to be the reſult of ſomething that had paſſed between her and Mr. Gaynham : in the courſe of it, Conſtance took occaſion to repeat her ſorrow at having ſo long confined her ladyſhip, and

prevented her from ſeeing her friends; and ſaid, that in future ſhe muſt make her conſulting her own eaſe and engagements the condition on which ſhe would accept her kindneſs. "Well," replied Lady Harriet, "I will do as you wiſh, and I have been "adviſing with Mr. Gaynham how it ſhall be con- "trived: I have a ſcheme to propoſe, which, if it "is not diſagreeable to you, will anſwer this pur- "poſe effectually,—it is that you ſhould quit your "preſent abode, and come here; then you will be "part of our family, and can partake in ſuch of "our engagements as will amuſe you."

This was a tempting invitation: it offered Conſtance all that ſhe could reaſonably hope, and it removed her far from every danger; but ſhe thought it right to reject it; to ſpeak againſt her inclination, in this inſtance, required an exertion, and her kind friend improving her ſilence, ſaid,—Come, you muſt yield to me, unleſs you have ſome very good reaſon to urge; if you have, I will wave it; but I ſee no objection, and my heart is much ſet on having you with me. The objection to it, Conſtance replied, is the little knowledge you have of me: had our intimacy, happily for me, commenced ſome years ago, I could not heſitate to accept your generoſity; but to put it in the power of any body to ſay, ſhould you have cauſe to repent it, that you were to blame in making one with whom you had ſo ſlight an acquaintance your friend, would be doing

you

you an irreparable injury. That fear, ſaid Lady Harriet, is all the ſecurity I wiſh for; ſince I am certain I cannot repent a cloſe connection with a perſon who entertainns ſuch ſentiments: beſides, Miſs Conſtance, ſuppoſe I had wanted profeſſedly a companion, I muſt have taken one of whom perhaps I had leſs knowledge than I have of you, and who might not have been half ſo well recommended; for I conſider Mr. Carwell's good opinion as equivalent to ſeven years acquaintance; I beg therefore that you will not coin objections; I have Mr. Gaynham's advice and approbation in the affair; he thinks it right, and I know no caſe in which I would not truſt his judgment: in ſhort, it is his requeſt, as well at mine, and if you have nothing more reaſonable to urge, I look on it as granted; yet, however your acquaintance would pleaſe me, that ſhall not tempt you to involve yourſelf in any difficulty: I aſſure you there is as much ſelf-intereſt as regard for you in this offer, and I will ſuffer you impartially to judge from what you have ſeen of our manner of living, whether being here would be more or leſs comfortable than your preſent ſituation.

The arguments which Conſtance's imagination ſuggeſted to her againſt this propoſal were weak; nevertheleſs, her reſolution was ſtrong, it was well founded, and ſhe determined to adhere to it, at leaſt till ſhe had obtained Mr. Carwell's permiſſion to ſhake off all diſguiſe. She could not tell Lady Har-

riet the contingency on which her complying depended, not could ſhe yet apply to Mr. Carwell for his concurrence, he being ſet out on his journey, and having promiſed to ſend her his addreſs, as ſoon as he was fixed for any time. Her natural abhorrence of impoſition, the dread of accidentally detecting herſelf, and the inevitable conſequence of any diſcovery, were inſuperable obſtacles, but they were ſuch as ſhe could not urge, and was therefore obliged to confine herſelf to the objection ſhe had at firſt ſtarted. The ſmall ſcope which this allowed her, encouraged Lady Harriet's perſeverance, and ſhe uſed forcible entreaty; but Conſtance, who ſaw every moment more clearly the imprudence of following her own inclination, anſwered her by ſaying, I am extremely ſenſible Lady Harriet, of your kindneſs, and wiſh ſincerely I could accept it; but I am ſure you will not urge me, when I tell you candidly, that however eligible your offer, and however advantageous and flattering to me, the predicament I ſtand in is ſuch as would render my accepting it improper, and, from a perverſe conjunction of circumſtances, it is my misfortune to find, that becoming a part of your family, would increaſe the difficulties I ſtruggle with: you will excuſe my being more explicit; I can ſcarcely bear to think of what I have ſuffered, and cannot reveal it; but ſo far I will promiſe, that if at any time hence the obſtacles to which I now moſt unwillingly ſubmit, ſhould be removed, and it is convenient to you to receive me, I will obey you.

Lady

Lady Harriet now reluctantly deſiſted; but ſhe appeared to have too much politeneſs and benevolence to ſeek her own gratification at the expence of her friend's eaſe, and the matter was compromiſed by an agreement on the part of her ladyſhip, that it ſhould be only time not otherwiſe engaged, that ſhe devoted to Conſtance, and on her's that ſhe ſhould never refuſe an invitation to Burlington-ſtreet, out of fear that ſhe was an interruption.

CHAP. XIV.

COMPLIANCE.

THIS reformed plan was entered on the next day, and Conſtance returned to Mrs. Heſham's to dinner. When ſhe took leave of Lady Harriet, ſhe inquired how her engagements ſtood for the morrow; and learning that ſhe expected ſome friends in the forenoon, it was agreed that they ſhould not meet till between three and four.

The remainder of the day was far from unpleaſantly ſpent with Mrs. Heſham; and Conſtance felt herſelf relieved by the accommodation on which ſhe had concluded with Lady Harriet. In the evening, juſt as they were thinking of retiring to their rooms, they were alarmed by a knock at the door, and the arrival of a meſſenger to inform Mrs. Heſham that a daughter of her's, who was ſettled in the country, was dangerouſly ill, and earneſtly deſired to ſee her. This melancholy and ſudden news terrified her to whom it was ſent ſo much as almoſt to deprive her of the uſe of her recollection; but Conſtance, whoſe ſervices were never confined to good wiſhes, when aſſiſtance was in her power, diſmiſſing all thoughts of reſt, buſied herſelf for her, and a poſt-chaiſe was ordered to be at the door at day-break:—the intermediate ſpace was fully occupied by neceſſary preparation, and when this was completed, Conſtance could not but aſk herſelf what was to become of *her* now. This care had not eſcaped Mrs. Heſham, even in her diſtreſs, and lamenting, as much for her ſake as her own, the neceſſity of the journey, ſhe had aſked her boarder what ſhe purpoſed doing while ſhe was gone, and whether ſhe could in any way be of uſe to her. The time of my abſence, ſaid ſhe, will be very precarious, and I would with all my heart, take you with me, if it were more agreeable than being left here, but that my daughter's ſituation in life, makes it improper,

per, for her huſband keeps an inn, and I muſt be at their houſe. You might, I am convinced, from what I have ſeen of you, remain very ſafely here, yet this I cannot adviſe, becauſe it would be extremely lonely, and though you might ſpend great part of your time with Lady Harriet, you would find returning to a home where no one could welcome you, very irkſome. Do not diſtreſs yourſelf, replied Conſtance, about me; I muſt conſider before I determine; I will ſee Mrs. Langrivier in the morning, and inquire if her lodgings are not yet empty, perhaps I can go there.

In this unſettled ſtate was Mrs. Heſham obliged to leave her, giving her a ſtrict charge to let her hear of her as ſoon and as often as poſſible. Conſtance ſtifled her emotion as much as ſhe could, knowing that her landlady's concern for her daughter was too great to bear addition; but Mrs. Heſham could not conceal what ſhe felt; ſhe ſeemed to have a fore-knowledge that this would be their laſt meeting, and ſo it proved, for ſhe lived but a very ſhort time afterwards.

The reſtraint which Conſtance had impoſed on herſelf, being taken off when Mrs. Heſham was gone, ſhe gave free vent to the grief this diſappointment of her views had occaſioned; and, when the firſt emotions had ſubſided, ſhe ſummoned all her faculties to her aid, in deliberating what ſhe had beſt do. The firſt thing that occurred to her was, the neceſſity of her remaining concealed, and

ſhe

ſhe therefore called up the maid, who was a perſon in years, and rather above the common rank, told her, that as Mrs. Heſham was gone, ſhe did not chuſe it ſhould be known that ſhe was in the houſe, and enjoined her not to mention it, nor to give the leaſt hint that her miſtreſs had left any body there except herſelf.—I will certainly do as you order, Ma'm, replied the woman; but I hope you will not be angry with me for ſaying, that it will ſoon be known that you are here; for, if you keep away from the windows, and do all you can, when you go out you will be ſeen.—This had not occurred to Conſtance; ſhe owned the force of the obſervation, and ſaw that ſhe could not hope to ſtay where ſhe was, without riſque,—She then thought of ſending to Mrs. Langrivier's to fetch her; but ſhe was grown ſo timorous that ſhe dreaded being left, even for a few minutes, in the houſe alone, leſt any one ſhould knock at the door: this fear was, however, in ſome meaſure removed, by the ſervant's promiſing, when ſhe mentioned her wiſh and her difficulty, to go and return with all poſſible expedition, adviſing her, if any one came, to let them wait till ſhe came back. To this ſhe agreed, and Mrs. Langrivier was with her before ſhe was at all diſturbed.

She communicated her diſtreſs to Mrs. Langrivier, without receiving any relief; her houſe was full, and ſhe could neither admit, nor recommend her to any other proper place; but ſhe offered to

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be with her at every interval ſhe could ſteal from her buſineſs, and to ſleep in the houſe, if it would make her more eaſy. So partial a remedy was declined, as well on account of its inefficacy, as for the trouble and loſs it muſt occaſion Mrs Langrivier; and Conſtance, having diſmiſſed her, with a promiſe to ſend again for her, if ſhe wanted her, ſat down alone, to contemplate the cloudy proſpect around her. She diſpenſed with the ceremony of breakfaſt, for ſhe was too much occupied to feel the want of food, and employed the time in thinking whether ſhe had any alternative to accepting Lady Harriet's invitation, and whether her ſcruples were ſuch as would juſtify her rejecting it, when ſo cordially urged. That ſhe had ſuch a reſource ſhe could not but acknowledge a peculiar bleſſing, and ſhe inclined to avail herſelf of it, though, as ſhe had not yet heard from Mr. Carwell, ſhe muſt become her gueſt, under an aſſumed name and character; but on this ſhe did not decidedly reſolve; ſhe intended to mention part of her difficulty, and to regulate her conduct by the reception that met with.

At a little after three, Lady Harriet's footman came for her; and, heartily glad to be relieved from the company of her own thoughts, ſhe was ſoon ready to ſet out. In going from the door one of her clogs came off, on which ſaying to the maid that, as the diſtance was ſo ſhort, ſhe would not be troubled with them, ſhe deſired her to take them in, and again turning

turning from the houſe, ſhe heard ſomebody coming behind her. She neither looked back nor took any notice till ſhe was ſtartled by the ſound of Lord Farnford's voice, who ſtepping before her, and clapping his hands together, exclaimed:— Good God! my love!—She involuntarily ſtood ſtill, frighted almoſt out of her ſenſes, while he began, in his uſual florid ſtyle, to expreſs the ſuperabundance of his joy. The imminence of her danger, recalled her wits, and turning from him to the ſervant behind her, ſhe ſaid to him, as if Lord Farnford had been a ſtranger,—You will not ſuffer me to be inſulted?—The man on this came up, and, with more ſpirit than ſhe expected, told his Lordſhip that he was ſent to take care of the lady, and nobody ſhould affront her.—In the mean time ſhe, fearing the conſequence of this addreſs, walked on, and had preſently the ſatisfaction of perceiving Lord Farnford retreat, muttering—You puppy! and with an oath, —to be bullied by her footman?——As ſhe turned the corner into Savile-paſſage, ſhe ventured to look towards Mrs. Heſham's, and ſaw him in cloſe conference with the maid; an intimation that the ardour of his heroiſm was not quite extinguiſhed, and that it behoved her to ſeek the moſt ſecure, even if the leaſt convenient ſituation.

There was no need of her telling that ſomething had ruffled her; her treacherous countenance ever divulged the ſtate of her ſpirits, and it excited inquiry

quiry both in Mr. Gaynham and his wife; ſhe anſwered their queries by ſaying, that ſhe had been ſtopped in the ſtreet by a gentleman who ſeemed to think gallantry a ſubſtitute for good manners.—And what did your ſervant do? ſaid Mr. Gaynham: ſtand by quietly?—No, replied Conſtance, he took my part nobly, and releaſed me in a minute.—I am glad to hear it, ſaid his maſter; he ſhall not loſe by it, but he ſhould have loſt his place if he had done otherwiſe,—But, my dear Miſs Conſtance, interpoſed Lady Harriet, I cannot believe ſuch an accident would make you look ſo; forgive me for ſaying ſo; really you appear to me as if you had ſat up all night: I am ſure you are not well; I never ſay any body ſo altered; do tell me what is the matter, for I am quite alarmed?

A flood of tears was all the anſwer Conſtance could make to this affectionate ſolicitude; and as ſhe remained for ſome ſeconds ſilent, Mr. Gaynham, as if apprehending that he was the impediment to her ſpeaking, left the room, and in a ſhort time ſhe ſo far recovered the power of utterance as to relate what had happened at Mrs. Heſham's: before ſhe could ſay any more than that ſhe was gone, Lady Harriet, throwing her arm round her neck, while with the other hand ſhe wiped the tears from her eyes, conjured her to conſider the houſe ſhe was in as her home, and to think no more of returning to Conduit-ſtreet. It was impoſſible for her now

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to refuſe; and, though but half ſatisfied with the impoſition ſhe was forced to, ſhe expreſſed her gratitude for ſuch unmerited friendſhip, and yielded to her kind importunity.

Lady Harriet, in the effuſion of her joy, ſought Mr. Gaynham, to make him a participant of her pleaſure; he returned into the room with her, and in the moſt cordial terms of benevolence, welcomed Miſs Conſtance as a member of his family: they ſat down to dinner together, and Lady Harriet, whoſe joy at ſeeing her friend ſeemed doubled by the idea of her reſidence with her, was wholly taken up with contriving her immediate removal, without the neceſſity of her going back to Mrs. Heſham's, even for her cloaths; but this could not be avoided, therefore before tea time, the ladies went thither, in Mr, Gaynham's coach, and put all her things in a poſture for carriage, to be ſent for in the evening.

Before ſhe left Mrs. Heſham's, Conſtance wiſhed to know what Lord Farnford had ſaid to the maid when ſhe ſaw him talking with her at the door; for this purpoſe, ſhe begged Lady Harriet's patience for a minute, and retiring into the back room, deſired her to tell her what queſtions that gentleman ſhe had ſeen ſtop her, had aſked.—Mercy on me! the woman replied, I never ſaw ſuch a man in my life: ſure he muſt be mad! he aſked me if you lived here, and how long you had been here, and a great deal, for he ſeemed very curious; and then he talked ſomething

thing about a Miſs Fitz ſomething, by which I thought the meant you, Ma'am; ſo I told him what your name was; he ſaid it wasn't ſo, and that you was very cunning, but not quite ſo cunning as he was; and that he would make you know.——Of information of this kind Conſtance needed a very ſmall quantity; ſhe ſaid ſhe had heard enough, rewarded the maid for the trouble ſhe had given her, and followed Lady Harriet to the coach.

The evening was agreeably ſpent without any other company than the family, and every point reſpecting the new gueſt's convenience was ſettled. Lady Harriet was ſo kind as to promiſe that no viſitors ſhould be ſuddenly let in upon her, and inſiſted on her following her own inclination either to retire, or to mix with the ſociety their houſe afforded:—this attention contributed much to Conſtance's eaſe, and ſhe now more ardently than ever longed to tell her good friends who ſhe was, and why it was neceſſary ſhe ſhould be concealed; but to do ſo without Mr. Carwell's permiſſion, ſhe thought if not imprudent, unwarrantable. Before the poſt went out ſhe wrote a few words to Mrs. Heſham, to inform her of her having changed her abode, and to deſire that ſhe might ſee her on her return.

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

INTRODUCTION.

SHE ſlept comfortably in her new apartment, and when ſhe waked ſaw herſelf nearer regaining a ſtate of tranquillity than ſome hours before ſhe had hoped ever to be. At breakfaſt, the weather proving very uninviting, Lady Harriet ſaid that unleſs Miſs Conſtance had any buſineſs out, or wiſhed for an airing, they would ſpend the forenoon at home, and added ;——We purpoſe going to the play in the evening :—Will it be agreeable to you ?—The propoſition for ſtaying at home was perfectly ſo ; but that of going to the play Conſtance thought ſhe ſhould be to blame to acquieſce in, even were ſhe thoroughly known to Mr. Gaynham and his wife. As matters ſtood, ſhe could not appear in public leſt ſhe ſhould be embarraſſed, if ſhe met any body ſhe had been acquainted with, by hearing herſelf addreſſed by her name of Fitzarthur: ſhe therefore excuſed herſelf ; but obtained a promiſe from Lady Harriet and Mr Gaynham that they would not, on her account, forbear going.

When the breakfaſt was over, Conſtance went with her Ladyſhip to the nurſery, and they afterwards

wards ſat down together to work, in a room even with the drawing-room, but not fronting the ſtreet, previous directions having been given to the ſervants to ſhow any body who might come to Lady Harriet into the parlour, and then to fetch her.—After two hours ſpent in amuſing converſation, Mr. Gaynham ſent for his wife, and while ſhe was gone, Conſtance heard a carriage ſtop at the door, and a rap that indicated a viſitor. In about half an hour Lady Harriet came into the room with joy in her eyes, and out of breath ſaid,—My brother is this moment arrived from the country;—he has promiſed to dine with us, and I wiſh to introduce him to you; but I would not do it till I knew you would not diſlike it: if you have no objection he ſhall come up.—Though the ſight of ſtrangers was painful to Conſtance, ſhe could not refuſe to admit ſo near a relation of her amiable benefactreſs, without involving her in reiterated difficulty, and ſhe replied that ſhe ſhould be happy in being known to any of her Ladyſhip's family.—You may truſt me, ſaid Lady Harriet, that I would not bring you acquainted with any improper perſon, and my brother might be as improper as any body; but I aſſure you, he is one of the beſt young men in the world, though you will not perhaps think him one of the moſt agreeable; for he has met with misfortunes, that have almoſt overſet him, and his ſpirits are ſtill very low.——Similarity of ſituation, often proves a bond of union. Conſtance's inclination to ſee this

this ſtranger, was not diminiſhed by what his ſiſter had ſaid of him, and her ladyſhip went down again.

In a few minutes Lady Harriet returned; and as ſhe opened the door, ſhe ſaid,—Since you will dine with us, I will ſhew you a friend of mine, whom you have never ſeen.—Conſtance roſe; her Ladyſhip entered, and was followed by a gentleman; but let thoſe who can, imagine the ſurprize, the confuſion, and the diſtreſs of this unhappy creature, when ſhe ſaw Lord Calorne, and heard Lady Harriet ſay,—Miſs Conſtance, this is my brother, Lord Calorne.—Utterly unable to make any reply, and yet with difficulty remaining ſilent, ſhe ſtood aghaſt, and motionleſs: his aſtoniſhment ſeemed not leſs than her's, but he ſooner recovered from it; he made a ſlight bow, ſaid,—I beg your pardon. Madam, for interrupting you;—and haſtily left the room.—Lady Harriet, whoſe countenance declared that what paſſed was unintelligible to her, followed him, and Conſtance heard them go together into the adjoining room. Happily for her, tears came to her relief; ſhe quitted her work, and retired to her chamber, waiting the event of the diſcovery which ſhe could not doubt Lord Calorne would make.

What ſhe felt during this interval exceeded far all her former ſufferings; for beſide the pain of meeting one for whom ſhe had never been able to conquer her partiality, notwithſtanding the conviction that

that he was unworthy of it, ſhe was oppreſſed by the conſideration that ſhe muſt appear to Lady Harriet as an impoſtor, and muſt expect all the reſentment and obloquy conſequent to ſuch a diſcovery. It was not to be ſuppoſed that her hitherto kind friend would adhere to her rather than to her brother, even if there were no tie but that of conſanguinity between them, much leſs probable was it where ſuch voluntary attachment had been manifeſted.—She now heartily repented the concealment ſhe had accepted; for though the name of Fitzarthur might have been a bar to a connection with any one allied to Lord Calorne, and thereby ſhe might have been deprived of the pleaſure ſhe had enjoyed in Lady Harriet Gaynham's acquaintance, an immediate rejection would have ſpared her preſent torment, the agonies of her ſituation being ſuch as ſhe would have thought no relinquiſhment too great to avoid.

Indiſperſible clouds now hovered on all ſides of her, and an end was put to all the pleaſure ſhe had promiſed herſelf and all hope of peace. Though the perſon originally injured, ſhe regarded herſelf as the aggreſſor, in having diſguiſed her name. With reſpect to her, Lord Calorne was the criminal; with reſpect to his ſiſter, ſhe was; and the conſciouſneſs that her intentions were upright, how ill an appearance ſoever they bore, was hardly ſtrong enough to combat the ſhame and fear that overwhelmed her.

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To continue a gueſt to the ſiſter of one from whom ſhe received ſuch injuries, even had Lady Harriet's compaſſion ſuppreſſed her reſentment, was impoſſible: but it was not likely that an alternative would be offered her, ſince ſhe could not doubt that when her Ladyſhip knew who ſhe was, ſhe would be very eaſily prevailed on to part with her. A gleam of hope now and then darted acroſs her mind, that one for whom ſo amiable a woman entertained ſo great a regard, and whom ſhe had characterized as *one of the beſt young men in the world*, could not be as culpable as he was repreſented; but of this, all reaſonable probability was precluded, by the teſtimonies againſt him. His conduct, with reſpect to herſelf, ſhe could in many inſtances account for, and forgive: ſhe had learned by the letters which he had returned her, that her name had been uſed by another; and when ſhe conſidered how it had been uſed, ſhe commended his ſlighting her; in the affair at Mr. Aiſtrey's, he had behaved, though contemptuouſly to her, yet with propriety; and in ſhort, ſhe could juſtify him in every circumſtance, except his urging her to a private marriage, and his connection with Miſs Greyburne.

To whom in this exigence ſhe ſhould fly for protection, ſhe knew not. Mrs. Langrivier could not receive her, and at Mrs. Heſham's ſhe could not think herſelf ſafe; yet thither ſhe feared ſhe muſt go; for though Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet might, from motives of humanity, permit her to

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ſtay in their houſe till ſhe could prudently leave it, no neceſſity, no danger, could reconcile her to remaining there under ſuch humiliating circumſtances, and her ſpirit was too great to accept favours where ſhe was not believed in any degree to merit them.

She had ſat a ſhort time alone, when Lady Harriet entered in tears, and neither of them could ſpeak for ſome minutes; at length, Conſtance ſaid, I muſt leave you, Madam;—I cannot ſtay here;—I am ſure, after what you muſt have heard from Lord Calorne, you cannot wiſh ever to ſee me again.—her Ladyſhip throwing herſelf on the bed, and crying with all imaginable vehemence, ſaid,—My brother has told me only that you are Miſs Fitzarthur; why did you conceal who you were?—I did it, replied Conſtance, by Mr. Carwell's advice, to ſhake off ſome diſagreeable connexions.—But ſurely, interrupted Lady Harriet, you could not hope to be long concealed:—as ſoon as my brother ſaw you, you muſt be diſcovered.—How could I, Conſtance aſked, know that Lord Calorne was your brother?—I have hear'd you ſpeak of a brother; but who he was I was wholly ignorant: and I knew my Lord had a ſiſter, but do not recollect that I ever hear'd what her name was: our meeting therefore was accidental, and though of all men living I would moſt carefully have ſhunned Lord Calorne, I could not expect or avoid ſeeing him; but I hope I have ſeen him for the laſt time.

His ſiſter now lifted up her eyes and looked rather ſternly at Miſs Fitzarthur, as if angry at this diſreſpectful expreſſion; then riſing, ſhe ſaid,—It is indeed my fault.—I have been too precipitate; I would not for the univerſe have been the means of putting him to ſuch pain:—it is very true that he did not want this to complete the uneaſineſs you have given him.———O! Miſs Fitzarthur! how can you excuſe yourſelf?—what have you to anſwer for!—to have treated any body as you have him would have been ſcandalous; but your horrid deceit is agravated by his merit:—I wiſh he had never known you.——Whatever uneaſineſs, replied Conſtance, gathering courage at theſe undeſerved reproaches, I may have occaſioned Lord Calorne, is only the conſequence of his own conduct; had he appeared what he really is, he had been equally kind to himſelf and to me; but by aſſuming a character which did not belong to him, he impoſed on me to no purpoſe.---I was ſo fooliſh as to believe he was what he pretended, and he has treated me as my credulity deſerved.

Lady Harriet, piqued at this accuſation of her brother, exclaimed,—How can you endeavour to make me think him to blame?---I know how he has been diſtreſſed, and I know, though not from him, for he never would ſay a word againſt you, I know how ill you have uſed him; but, Miſs Fitzarthur, you are reſponſible for your actions, and I am ſorry to ſay you have much to anſwer for.---Thank heaven,

ven, returned Conſtance, of one comfort I have never yet been deprived,---that of a peaceful conſcience.---I have erred, God knows I have: but it has, I truſt, been more in conſequence of following the advice of ſome I imagined my friends than from my own inclination. Lord Calorne's ſilence is no favour to me;---he cannot upbraid me with having deceived him; but I am ſo warned againſt him, that not to ſhun, as I have done and will do, the man who under the notion of protecting virtue betrayed it, would be the height of imprudence.---From what I have heard of Miſs Fitzarthur, returned Lady Harriet, looking ſtedfaſtly at her, I am not ſurprized at any calumny ſhe thinks proper to throw on my brother; but I cannot hear him ſo ſlandered without giving him an opportunity of vindicating himſelf: this, if you *can* confront him he ſhall do; if you *cannot*, you will not I hope, think me capricious if I rather juſtify him than you. Certainly not, ſaid Conſtance, but, added ſhe, taking Lady Harriet's hand, my dear Madam, I own my want of fortitude:---I know not how to meet Lord Calorne: yet this is the conſequence of ſomething far different from guilt:---yes I will confront him, I will ſee him when you pleaſe.---Her Ladyſhip then quitted the room, and Conſtance employed the time of her abſence in endeavours to fortify her mind for this meeting, which on ſome accounts ſhe rejoiced at, though her reaſons to dread it preponderated.

CHAP. XVI.

DEFENCE.

A SERVANT was ſent to her in about half an hour to deſire her to come down, and ſhe went to the parlour, where Lord Calorne, Lady Harriet, and Mr. Gaynham were waiting for her: Conſtance was ſhocked at the viſible change ſo ſuddenly wrought; but exerted herſelf, knowing that for this ſevere trial her ſtock of fortitude would not be more than ſufficient. The ſolemnity of the ſcene added new terrors:---a ſilence of a few ſeconds enſued which Lord Calorne broke by addreſſing himſelf to her.---My ſiſter, Madam, ſaid he, is unhappy while ſhe thinks I lie under any unjuſt imputations, and ſhe urges my vindicating myſelf from a charge brought againſt me by you; but for the ſake of her peace, I ſhould, as I would have avoided torture, have ſhunned meeting you:--- ſhe has told me that in a converſation reſpecting me, you, perhaps unpremeditatedly, ſaid what you may now wiſh ſhould be forgotten.---So far from it, replied Conſtance, warmly, that I avow it, and am confident I ſaid nothing that I cannot ſupport;---I ſaid it would

would have been the height of imprudence in me had I not ſhunned your Lordſhip, when I found that under the pretext of befriending virtue you had betrayed it.—Miſs Fitzarthur, replied Lord Calorne, nothing from you ſhall ever make me intemperately angry; but had this been ſaid by one whom it were not cowardice to puniſh I ſhould not have anſwered him by words:—from what you pleaſe to accuſe me of, I will, to the extent of truth, defend myſelf, and only lament that there is the diſtinction of accuſer and defendant between two people, who if I might judge of your ſentiments by my own, twelve months ago thought their inſeparable union eſſential to their happineſs:—No tears, Madam, he continued, ſeeing her eyes gliſten, firmneſs becomes the part you have choſen. I cannot doubt your ability and willingneſs to explain what you have ſaid, and I therefore deſire I may hear how you can ſupport an aſſertion the truth of which I poſitively deny.

As there was now no fear that any thing which ſeparated Lord Calorne from Miſs Fitzarthur would incenſe him againſt the cauſe, ſhe did not heſitate to ſupport her character, and therefore, taking out her pocket-book, ſhe ſought for the letter which Miſs Greyburne had dropped: her agitation was ſo great that ſhe could ſcarcely command the uſe of her fingers, but, having found what ſhe looked for, ſhe gave it to Lord Calorne, who read it, his countenance ſtill remaining unchanged, and with a ſmile of pity and contempt retnrned it to her, ſaying,—

And pray Madam what do you infer from this? for I admit that it is of my hand-writing.---I infer, anſwered Conſtance, provoked at the expreſſion of his features, that all your Lordſhip's pretenſions to virtue and morality are hypocriſy.

This does not prove it, ſaid he, cooly; though I confeſs the appearance is againſt me; but would to God this were the only matter of difference between us!---could *my* ſuſpicions be as eaſily removed; but before I ſay any more this muſt be accounted for:---ſee, ſaid he to Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet, how our beſt actions may be turned into accuſations againſt us.---They both, on looking at the letter, which Conſtance gave to them, ſeemed perfectly acquainted with the tranſaction to which it referred; Lady Harriet ſmiled, and Mr. Gaynham, taking Miſs Fitzarthur's hand, told her that, whatever her ſuſpicions might be, the writing that billet reflected honour on Lord Calorne.---She made no reply, and his Lordſhip ſaid,---In order to my own vindication I am ſorry to be obliged to depart from the rule of concealing the failings of thoſe to whom we owe benefits, but here, without taking on me ſuch a load as would be inſupportable, and giving ſome, who wiſh me like themſelves, room to exult, I cannot be ſilent:---from whom, pray Madam, had you that letter?---From a Lady, anſwered Conſtance, who told me that it was to her that it was addreſſed.---I ſee, continued he, the concluſion you formed, and though I am impatient to know how

you

you met with her, I will ſatisfy you firſt:---the Lady to whom this was written, I am grieved to ſay, is and has been for ſome years maintained by my father:---ſhe was diſtreſſed for money, and as I know her notwithſtanding her ſituation, to be a very deſerving woman, I have often been prevailed on to urge Lord Ormington's remitting what ſhe wanted. I was with him in the country at a time, when after ſeveral fruitleſs applications, ſhe wrote from town, in the moſt, pathetic terms reproaching him with unkindneſs: by the ſame poſt ſhe ſent me a requeſt that I would intercede for a ſpeedy ſupply. Lord Ormington was then laid up with the gout; but, on my entreating him, he ſaid that if I would write in his name to her, he would furniſh me with a bank bill to encloſe. I gladly accepted the office of relieving her diſtreſs, and ſitting by his bed-ſide wrote as he dictated; but ſurely Miſs Greyburne would never uſe this to my diſadvantage!---are you ſatisfied, Madam?---By no means, replied Conſtance, if it is as you repreſent it, why did you ſign it with your title? why not with Lord Ormington's? Lady Harriet and Mr. Gaynham were both going to ſpeak when Lord Calorne, making a ſign to them not to anſwer, ſaid,---Pray, ſuppoſing this had been ſigned *Ormington*, would it have ſatisfied you? I could then have had no doubt, returned Conſtance, nor would it have been brought to prove what I was told.---A moment's reflection, continued he, will convince you that it is ſigned as

father would have ſigned it; if you remember, when I firſt became acquainted with you, at Marſtonbury, I bore only the *name* of my family; it was between that time and the death of my grand-father that this was written; by conſequence therefore my father was then what I am now.

An electrical ſhock could not have had a greater effect on Conſtance than this conviction; it was indeed an electrical ſhock to her mind; not daring to truſt herſelf, and fearful leſt her judgment might be impoſed on, ſhe ſtruggled to conceal that ſhe was ſatisfied; but the attempt to appear ſuſpicious failed, and ſhe remained ſilent and confounded, ſecretly blaming her want of ſagacity which had prevented her ſeeing this matter as it really was. Had ſhe followed the preſent impulſe, ſhe had implored Lord Calorne's pardon, and acknowledged ſhe had, notwithſtanding all her caution, too haſtily condemned him; ſhe ſaw the chief obſtacle to her thinking well of him removed, ſhe could not but imagine he had it in his power to exculpate or excuſe every other circumſtance that had given her offence, and ſhe now reproached herſelf as having been the occaſion of all ſhe had undergone, and with throwing away the happineſs that had been offered her; yet there were other articles of accuſation to be produced, and ſhe determined that ſhe would not, by too readily acquieſcing, riſque being again deceived.

Lord

Lord Calorne, who had after having ſpoken, turned away from her, now deſired to know how ſhe had procured this intelligence, and ſhe related to him the particulars of Miſs Greyburne's viſit, and what ſhe had learned from her; all was very eaſily accounted for by carrying in her mind the idea that it referred to the preſent Lord Ormington; but Lord Calorne profeſſed himſelf wholly at a loſs to reconcile the part Miſs Greyburne had acted with what he knew of her; he ſaid he ſuſpected ſhe was drawn into ſome ſcheme, and that he would find out what it was. After a ſhort conſultation between him, his ſiſter, and Mr. Gaynham, they reſolved that a meſſage ſhould be ſent, in Lady Harriet's name, to Miſs Greyburne, deſiring to ſee her immediately: a ſervant was diſpatched, and Conſtance, to get rid of the reſtraint ſhe was under, would have gone out of the room, had not Mr. Gaynham ſtopped her ſaying,---Do not go, Miſs Fitzarthur, till you have heard when Miſs Greyburne will come; perhaps ſhe may be here preſently, for ſhe lives near, and is ſeldom engaged, and, after the pains Lord Calorne has taken to convince you, I would not have his exculpation delayed a minute longer than is neceſſary.---I know not what it is, ſaid his Lordſhip, that urges me to the inveſtigation of this buſineſs; in other affairs I have reſted ſatisfied with an innate approbation, and I ſee no end that this exertion can ſerve;---if I have loſt ſo much credit as to be ſuſ-

pected, what is left me is hardly worth preſerving.

Sorrow for her error and ſtrong affection for him whom it had injured, now overcame all reſentment; ſhe could have given Lord Calorne credit for unſullied honour, and would again have pledged every thing dear to her for his having behaved, on all occaſions, with integrity and propriety; in this moment ſhe felt afraid of him; ſhe was awed by the diſtance at which he had caſt off calumny, and with ſupplicating looks ſhe raiſed her eyes towards him, and met his; ſhe had taken him off his guard, and his countenance beſpoke tenderneſs and pity; but inſtantly aſſuming a repelling ſeverity, he went from her, and converſed with his ſiſter, ſeemingly unintereſted in what paſſed.

Mr. Gaynham now repeated his hope that ſhe was ſatisfied, and ſhe, reſolving that overtures of reconciliation ſhould not unencouraged be made wholly by her, replied that in this inſtance ſhe had certainly been deceived; but that there were other circumſtances——and here ſhe heſitated.---Theſe words caught Lord Calorne's attention; he quitted his ſiſter, and ſtood before Conſtance, as if waiting for what ſhe ſhould ſay; all were ſilent, till he ſaid to her,---Either, Miſs Fitzarthur, you have induſtriouſly ſought for reaſons to juſtify your own conduct by accuſing mine, or ſome one has taken great pains to miſrepreſent me; this is probably the

laſt

laſt time we ſhall have any intercourſe, and I deſire that I may hear all you have picked up; you may perhaps regret your being undeceived, for I know not of what material your heart is formed; but if you think one for whom you have ſhewn ſo much contempt worth another moment's conſideration,—your inconſiſtency, he continued, after an abrupt pauſe, obſerving the tears ſtart in her eys, is always to aſtoniſh me; while your countenance expreſſes ſenſibility, you act as if dead to every ſenſe; but I inſiſt on knowing what remains. An anſwer to one queſtion, ſhe replied, pale and trembling, will convince me; yet what right have I to be ſatisfied.

That, ſaid Lord Calorne, we will not diſpute; whether you have any or none, you ſhall have all the ſatisfaction I can give you, and I will readily anſwer any interrogatories. Who then, ſhe aſked, was the Lady you viſited in Pall-Mall when I was at Mrs. Stavenell's? Lady Harriet and Mr. Gaynham were again going to ſpeak, when again ſtopping them, he ſaid; Pray Madam, tell me, what have you heard of that Lady? for it is true I did viſit her, and do ſtill, but not in Pall Mall. I own, rejoined Conſtance, I heard nothing more than vague conjecture, yet on inquiry I was forced to believe that this was Miſs Greyburne; I ſaw your Lordſhip one evening go to her houſe, and ſaw the reception you met with: I was told her name was not Graham, though ſomething like it;

that it was ſaid her huſband was in the country, which was not credited; that it was rather, from various circumſtances, thought that a gentleman who viſited her ſupported her, and you were pointed out to me as that gentleman:—I believe, anſwered Lord Calorne, turning from her with ſuch a ſmile as indicated his being able to reſolve this. My ſiſter can beſt inform you who the Lady was, and I refer you to her. I am ſorry, ſaid Lady Harriet, that I ſhould have been the cauſe of drawing ſuſpicion on one ſo ſuperior to it; it was me whom my brother viſited in Pall-Mall, and you ſhall know the particulars. I had married clandeſtinely, and the fear of my father's anger made concealment neceſſary; Mr. Gaynham therefore took me to the continent, but, finding I was uneaſy at my abſence from England, he came over with me, and as my father was then, as he remains, unreconciled to us, we thought it prudent on that account, and becauſe our fortune was not what it is now, to live with all poſſible privacy. Mr. Gaynham was obliged to go into the country, and fixed me in a ready furniſhed houſe in Pall-Mall, where my brother *ſupported* me, it is true, for nothing but his kindneſs in viſiting me often could have carried me through what I ſuffered; but I little thought he would ever have been called on to juſtify his kindneſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVII.

EXCULPATION.

CONSTANCE's ſituation was now intolerably humiliating; ſhe conſidered herſelf as an accuſer whoſe charge had recoiled on herſelf, and and having failed in theſe inſtances, ſhe did not dare mention any other doubt; ſhe ſaw Lord Calorne riſe ſuperior to every calumny, and ſhe was induced to hope that the report of his intended marriage with Miſs Ecklow was either accidentally erroneous, or that ſome purpoſe was to be ſerved by it for which it was raiſed. But what was her own miſery if he was really as innocent of this as of any connection with Miſs Greyburne! That he ſhould have ſlighted her, that he ſhould even have thought of chuſing ſome other woman, after the receipt of the three forged letters, was ſo far from being either wonderful or criminal, that it was what might have been expected from a man of honour and underſtanding, and in itſelf highly laudable; ſhe therefore, in acquitting him, condemned herſelf; and feeling it impoſſible to ſupport ſelf reproach, ſhame, regret, and the preſence of Lord Calorne,

Calorne, ſhe roſe, and begged to be permitted to leave the houſe.

Mr. Gaynham replied that ſhe ſhould not be detained againſt her will; but that as he had accepted the protection of her, he muſt be ſatisfied that in quitting his houſe ſhe did not expoſe herſelf to any inconvenience. Do not deſert her, ſaid Lord Calorne, I bear her no reſentment, ſhe is in a friendleſs ſtate, and it is very unfit ſhe ſhould be left to ſtruggle with the world; forget that ſhe is Miſs Fitzarthur; only do not let me ſee her, and I ſhall commend any kindneſs you can ſhew her. She burſt into tears at expreſſions of ſuch charity and generoſity, and dropping into the chair ſhe had riſen from, covered her face with her hand, and cried bitterly.--It is too much to be borne, ſaid his Lordſhip taking up his hat; either my love for her or my reaſon muſt give way: I cannot ſee her ſo agitated, and remain unmoved. I heartily forgive her; but I can never meet her again.

Canſtance would now have ſaid ſomething by way of juſtification of her conduct, but her tears, which could no longer be reſtrained, prevented her, and ſhe roſe to leave the room, when Mr. Gaynham ſtopped her. Perhaps, ſaid he,---but you agitate Lady Harriet---Will you come with me into the library?

She followed him, and there, having made her ſit down, he ſaid, I ſuppoſe you know that Mr. Carwell mentioned you to me as a perſon whoſe misfortunes

tunes demanded assistance, and whose situation required protection: what he told me of you, makes me very unwilling to believe that you are Miss Fitzarthur; but that being forced on my mind, I can only regret that you have deprived me of the pleasure of being useful to you, and of that we expected in your acquaintance; yet my regard for my friend Carwell, and my duty as a man, will not suffer me to abandon you; as you cannot stay here, I can offer you little; but any species or degree of aid that you may want towards settling yourself secure from the many dangers that await such a young woman, you may command from me. Since the discovery that Lord Calorne's coming here has made, I can scarcely judge what I am to believe, and my offer may be officious, for you possibly have friends in all ways better able to serve you.

In broken articulations she thanked him for his kindness, and said she had no friends near her. It is no kindness to you, he replied, it is common humanity: you must not be irretrievably lost for want of care. Could I, he continued, looking stedfastly at her, obliterate the errors of your conduct, no one in the world would more readily, more eagerly assist you; a prepossession in your favour when I first heard of you, my wife's growing attachment to you, your own apparent merit and endowments; were all stimulatives with me to protect you, by making you a member of my family; for your

sake

ſake I hope you have a ſenſe of your deviation, and that you will endeavour to recover the path you have forſaken.

She now could not forbear aſking herſelf what was the enormous crime ſhe had been guilty of; her conſcience acquitted her, ſhe knew indeed that ſome particular occurrences, with reſpect to Lord Calorne wore an unfavourable aſpect; but ſhe had not yet heard herſelf charged with a fault that deſerved the ſeverity with which ſhe was treated; and, Lady Harriet having told her that her brother had never ſaid any thing againſt her, it was improbable that ſhe or Mr. Gaynham knew of the letters. She therefore ſummoned her fortitude, and replied that ſhe began to imagine, he was deceived in his opinion of her; that, though ſhe had intended no vindication of herſelf, ſhe was obliged to rectify miſtakes, and that ſhe begged to know what it was that ſo loudly called for cenſure. Mr. Gaynham, ſtarted back, ſaid; Is it poſſible you can wiſh me to tell you? Aſk your own heart, Miſs Fitzarthur? I need not accuſe you.—My own heart, ſhe anſwered, acquits me of greater errors than thoſe which we are ſubjected to by human frailty.—This, indeed, ſaid Mr. Gaynham, ſmiling expreſſively, is an error of *human frailty*, yet it might have been avoided had your principles been good.—As I cannot underſtand your meaning, returned Conſtance, I inſiſt on hearing explicitly what it is. Are you Miſs Fitzarthur? he aſked. Certainly, ſhe replied. And

do

do you not know the Earl of Farnford? rejoined Mr. Gaynham. Yes, anſwered ſhe, and moſt ſincerely wiſh I had never known him. I am glad you do, ſaid he; I as ſincerely wiſh it: if you had never known him, Lord Calorne and my wife might have been leſs unhappy; but how could you at the ſame time favour him, to the ruin of your character, and preſerve the appearance of every thing amiable to Lord Calorne? it was fortunate indeed that your attachment to Lord Farnford was ſo ſoon found out, though it has entirely ruined my brother's peace. My attachment to Lord Farnford, ſhe repeated, reddening at the ſuppoſition! who dares to ſay I was ever attached to him? if there is in the creation any thing that I deteſt and abhor, it is him; who can have aſſerted ſuch a falſity? Why, may I credit my ſenſes? ſaid Mr. Gaynham; did you not leave London with him? did you not go to Farnford-park with him? and did not he and you retire together to an obſcure houſe in the neighbourhood till you were obliged to return home? perhaps you may *now* diſlike his lordſhip, but I think you did not then; at leaſt if my authority is at all to be depended on; and, to deal ingenuouſly with you, I will give up my author, who is Mr. Metward, Lord Ormington's chaplain.

And ſo, replied Conſtance, ſighing, our ſevereſt misfortunes are to be imputed to us as crimes, and puniſhed as ſuch. Mr Metward is, I own a very capable witneſs, for, to his eternal ſcandal be it

ſpoken

ſpoken, he was preſent great part of the time I ſpent with Lord Farnford. It was againſt the conviction of my own judgment, and in direct oppoſition to my inclination, that I accepted the offer of travelling with Lord Farnford and his ſiſters; and I would not have gone with them had not my aunt, with whom I then was, adviſed it. What I heard of Lord Calorne drove me from London, for—— here ſhe heſitated; but preſently recovering, ſhe continued; Sir, your kindneſs to me encourages me to lay open my heart to you; all neceſſity of concealment is over; I conſider myſelf as a perſon about to quit the world, and care not who knows my weakneſſes, provided more than I have committed are not laid to my charge. Lord Calorne thought fit to diſtinguiſh me by particular regard, and, I own to you, his affection was ſincerely returned; I believed him endowed with every quality that was eſtimable, and this laid the foundation of an attachment to him, ſo united with my very being, that were he at this moment to kill me at his feet, my laſt breath ſhould expire in prayers for him. Judge then whether I could ſtay where I was continually liable to meet him, when I was aſſured he had impoſed on me, that he was as much a libertine as thoſe who made open profeſſion of it, and, which I have not yet ventured to mention, that, at the time when he had obtained my father's approbation, he was negotiating a marriage with Miſs Ecklow. Here ſhe pauſed, to ſee what effect this produced on her auditor;

ditor; he ſhook his head, ſaid nothing, and ſhe proceeded; To avoid ſeeing Lord Calorne, and ſeriouſly fearing my want of ſteadineſs to act with propriety where my affections were ſo deeply intereſted, I quitted London under Lord Fanford's protection, who promiſed to conduct me ſafely to Marſtonbury; he broke his word, and made uſe of an artifice firſt to draw me to Farnford-park, and then to detain me at the houſe of one whom he had made infamouſly ſubſervient to him, where, had it not been for the interpoſition of Providence, I had been forced by him and Mr. Metward to marry him. Since that time I have been neceſſitated to ſee him occaſionally, as itwas the condition on which he promiſed me peace and ſecurity; but I have been always in dread of him, and it was, as Mr. Carwell can tell you, to avoid him that I conſented to ſuppreſs my name of Fitzarthur.

She perceived Mr. Gaynham's attention was fixed, and his countenance beſpoke pleaſure in hearing her vindicate herſelf.—I do not aſk you, ſaid ſhe, to rely on my aſſertions. I believe I can prove this beyond doubt; and now, Sir, judge whether I am moſt criminal or unfortunate.—She again burſt into tears. Mr. Gaynham encouraged her by ſaying he could not heſitate to believe her, that ſhe muſt not go from the houſe, for all might yet be well, and that Lady Harriet ſhould hear her exculpation.

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They then returned to the parlour, where they found her ladyſhip not at all recovered from her grief. Come, ſaid Mr. Gaynham to her, do not be ſo immoderately ſorrowful; I hope I bring you a little conſolation; if Miſs Fitzarthur will repeat to you what ſhe has juſt now told me, I believe your opinion of her will be much changed.——— At theſe words ſhe raiſed her head, and anſwered that ſhe ſhould be very glad to hear any thing that would mend her opinion; but her brother ſat ſilent, as if ignorant of what had paſſed.

CHAP. XVIII.

CONFESSION.

ALL thoughts of Conſtance's leaving the houſe were ſoon laid aſide; but ſhe was diſappointed when ſhe ſaw that a circumſtantial account of what had happened between her leaving Mrs. Stavenell's and reaching Marſtonbury wrought a very ſmall change in Lord Calorne's countenance: the only anſwer he made was that he rejoiced, for her ſake, in her being able to exculpate

pate herſelf in *this* inſtance, and that he acknowledged ſhe had not put in execution the revenge with which ſhe had menaced him.

Lady Harriet caught at theſe words, and ſeemed relapſing into dejection, till Conſtance, who was now reſolved to leave nothing unaccounted for, ſaid, I know very well what Lord Calorne means. If you do, replied his lordſhip, and account as ſatisfactorily for that, I will wave every thing elſe: for I can pretend indifference no longer; if you have at all erred, I am ſure your repentance is ſincere;—you cannot have been guilty of any thing for which the ſufferings I have been witneſs to were not a full atonement.—She could only anſwer him with tears; but, as ſoon as ſhe regained the power of ſpeech, ſhe told him ſhe believed ſhe could recollect all thoſe unfortunate circumſtances and ſituations which had rendered her ſuſpected, and that ſhe was perſuaded, when his lordſhip heard her, he would acquit her intentions.

A ſhadow of innocence, ſaid he, ſhall be extended to a proof of it; ſave me the taſk of accuſing, and in a few words tell me I have been impoſed on.—Indeed you have been moſt wickedly impoſed on, ſhe replied, taking out the three letters which had been returned as her's, and giving them to Lady Harriet, who read them, and ſhewed them to Mr. Gaynham; they excited his mirth, and to render Miſs Fitzarthur's having them in her poſſeſſion intelligible, Lord Calorne gave this account of them. That

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they were at different times ſent to him; that ſurprized and confounded at the receipt of the firſt, his anxiety to find it, as he ſuppoſed, a trick, led him to be at the place to which it directed him, and————Here he pauſed, and Conſtance, who ſaw from what his unwillingneſs to go on proceeded, ſupplied the imperfection by ſaying,—And you found me there, my Lord; but it was accidentally;—Lady Emma Peryton and I had been a walking there; ſhe had juſt quitted me to call on a Lady in Clarges-ſtreet, and I promiſed to wait for her.—I went, reſumed Lord Calorne, and found Miſs Fitzarthur walking with only a ſervant;—that I might gratify my curioſity without encouraging her, I took Metward with me, thinking him then my friend, but I did not reveal to him the buſineſs I went on.—When we were near her, I ſaw Lady Emma going out at Lord Bath's gate, and I thought the promiſe contained in the billet, as far as the time would admit, fulfilled;—few words paſſed between us, for I was too much hurt by this proof to remain long with her; ſhe ſaid ſhe waited for Lady Emma Peryton, and I, as emphatically as I could, anſwered, that I was ſorry to ſee her there.—I left her, and walked at a diſtance, ſtill obſerving her;—Lady Emma returned; and I bid adieu to Miſs Fitzarthur and all hopes of happineſs together. The day after this, I received the ſecond letter; I conſidered her then as irreclaimably abandoned, and

and I determined to take no notice of the ſummons, till reflecting on the misfortune of her good father and family, in having one ſo criminally imprudent allied to them, and hoping, as her exceſſive kindneſs indicated my having ſome aſcendency over her, that well-timed reproof might ſave her, I prevailed on myſelf to meet her, and in the ſevereſt terms to reproach her.—I had not been a quarter of an hour in the walk, before I ſaw Miſs Fitzarthur coming, with no other company than her ſervant: as ſhe approached me, all that I had a few days before believed of her roſe to my remembrance, and I moſt ſincerely lamented this alarming depravity, of which I was aſtoniſhed that I had till then never diſcovered any ſymptom.—I began to ſpeak to her; but, I ſuppoſe, in ſuch a manner as, ſhe being ignorant of my deſign in coming there, muſt have made her think me crazy.—I remember I told her ſhe was in a dangerous place, and ſternly bid her quit it; ſhe, with what I thought *affected* ſurprize in her countenance, inquired what I meant: I repeated what I had ſaid, and told her ſhe muſt go home immediately; ſhe looked terrified, aſked what danger threatened her, and offered to ſend her man back for a coach, *if I would ſtay with her till his return*: this I conſidered as a proof of every thing I had been taught by the letters; I abruptly quitted her, and, turning away, watched her till ſhe went out at Groſvenor-gate.——I then received the laſt billet, upbraiding me with cruelty, and ſoon after heard Miſs Fitzarthur

thur was at Lord Farnford's houſe in the country——I could not think of any farther intercourſe with ſo very kind a lady, and whoſe affections were ſo eaſily transferable, and ſome circumſtances occurring, at her return to town, which I could not ſatisfactorily conſtrue, I wiſhed her to know my ſentiments, and therefore wrote to her deſiring her to give up my letters; at the ſame time I reſtored theſe three, which were all I ever received from her.

It was very eaſy to prove this a forgery, and not a doubt being entertained of Lady Emma Peryton's claim to the merit of it, Lord Calorne owned Conſtance fully acquitted. He ſeemed to have no other care than that of removing the veſtiges of ſorrow from her countenance, when Miſs Greyburne was announced; an interruption which he would willingly have diſpenſed with; but ſhe was come, and muſt be admitted.

When ſhe entered the room, and ſaw Miſs Fitzarthur, ſhe ſtarted, and would have retreated, had not Lady Harriet brought her forward: ſhe was deſired to ſit down, and Lord Calorne, holding Conſtance's hand, aſked Miſs Greyburne if ſhe had ever before ſeen that Lady, to which ſhe replied faintly in the affirmative; he then aſked her where and on what occaſion.—That, my Lord, ſaid ſhe, you know, I am ſure, as well as I do;—yet I am not ſo much to blame as I appear.—I ſuppoſe, he replied, that you acted under the influence of a

ſuperior

ſuperior power ;— all the reparation I expect is your confeſſing the falſhood of the ſtory you were, I will believe, *employed* to propagate. The ſtory rejoined Miſs Greyburne, is true, and of Lord Calorne, though not of you: it related wholly to your father. Will you then, ſaid his lordſhip, ſo far oblige me, as to tell me at whoſe inſtigation and for what purpoſe it was ſo ingeniouſly told?

You ſhall know, ſhe anſwered, how I was drawn into this infamous buſineſs. One morning laſt ſpring, Mr. Metward came to me and told me, my Lord was engaged in a matter in which I ſhould be wanted ; I ſaid, I was ready to ſerve him, and learned that Lord Ormington was embarraſſed by a propoſal which Mr. Ecklow had made him, to bring about a marriage between your lordſhip and his daughter. I then, for the firſt time, heard of your attachment to Miſs Fitzarthur, and that Lord Ormington had ſo far authorized it, as to make it difficult to recede with any preſervation of his honour ; that it was abſolutely needful that the match ſhould be broken off, it being confidently rumoured that Sir Edward's fortune was ruined ; and that you muſt have Miſs Ecklow, becauſe her father had offered, if the marriage was effected, to give up a debt due from Lord Ormington. Mr. Metward told me he knew nothing would prevail on you to quit Miſs Fitzarthur ; but if we could contrive to ſet you at variance, it would render you ſo deſperate, that you might be wrought on to marry

Miſs Ecklow; the only way of doing this, he ſaid, was to repreſent your lordſhip to Miſs Fitzarthur in ſuch a light as would diſguſt her; and, from the character you had given of her to your father, and her rejection of Lord Farnford, it was evident, that whatever accuſed you of immorality and profligacy would anſwer the purpoſe; he concluded by ſaying that I was the only perſon that could do it, and that he was commiſſioned by Lord Ormington to deſire me to undertake it.—I was not yet loſt to the ſenſe of what was right; I ſhuddered at the propoſal, and refuſed the office. Mr. Metward left me, and ſoon after my Lord ſent for me, and told me he had heard of my obſtinacy, and inſiſted on my compliance. I was firm in denying my aſſiſtance, till he threatened to turn me and his children into the ſtreet. I then yielded, and became an unwilling accomplice; but had I foreſeen what was the conſequence of it, had I ſuſpected that Mr. Metward was to ſerve another cauſe beſide this, I would ſtill have reſiſted. When the method to be purſued was agreed on, I went to Miſs Fitzarthur, and, that I might have as little falſhood as poſſible to anſwer for, I contrived to effect my purpoſe by miſleading her;—I perceived her confidence in you, after every ſhock returned, and the certainty that poſitive ruin awaited my failing in my commiſſion, forced me to produce a letter, which unfortunately your generoſity had tempted you to write yourſelf, though it was really from Lord Ormington. I

availed myſelf of her not recollecting that, at the time of writing it, the title of Earl had not deſcended to your father, and I baſely impoſed on her :—I fear I left this letter with her, for I have never ſince found it.—After you had poſitively refuſed to ſee Miſs Ecklow, and declared that no conſideration ſhould prevail on you to relinquiſh this Lady, Lord Ormington apprehended your marrying her privately to put it our of your power to obey him, and I was ordered to inform her that you were engaged to Miſs Ecklow : I did ſo, and in a few days heard that Miſs Fitzarthur was returned into the country.

'It is not till within a month that I learnt that while Mr. Metward was ſerving Lord Ormington, he was employed by Lord Farnford : I by accident heard of her detention in her journey toMarſtonbury, and conſidering myſelf as the occaſion of it, I have not had a moment's peace. I have been revolving in my mind whether I ſhould tell your lordſhip; but I I was deterred by the fear that, as it was not to be expected you could ſuppreſs your reſentment, Lord Ormington would revenge himſelf: had I, however, known where to find Miſs Fitzarthur, I ſhould, at all events have communicated to her what, from the ſtrong partiality ſhe manifeſted for you, I was ſure it would give her pleaſure to hear.'

When Miſs Greyburne ceaſed, Conſtance reſtored to her the letter ſhe had dropped; and with

the forgiveneſs and pity, even of thoſe ſhe had moſt injured, ſhe was ſuffered to depart. As ſoon as ſhe was gone, Lord Calorne ſent to his father's deſiring to ſee Mr. Metward; but his ſuſpicions had been rouſed by the meſſage to Miſs Greyburne, and he was not to be found.

Lord Calorne dined at Mr. Gaynham's and Conſtance having hinted that much of the credit ſhe had given to Miſs Greyburne was the conſequence of his clandeſtine overture and that it was ſtrengthened by the reports of his intended marriage with Miſs Ecklow, he exculpated himſelf by telling her that he had urged her to a private wedding, becauſe he had then learned from his father that Sir Edward's fortune was ſunk, and with the information had received a command to addreſs Miſs Ecklow in her ſtead; that knowing Conſtance's generous diſintereſtedneſs, and underſtanding that the ſtate of her father's affairs was a ſecret to her, he feared ſhe might refuſe him as ſhe had loſt her fortune and hoped, to ſecure her and rid himſelf of importunity, if he prevailed on her: that this embarraſſment it was which had dejected him, and that in their angry parting, when they had ſo miſtaken each other's meaning, he had imagined ſhe was offended at his concealing what related to Miſs Ecklow, when it was of Miſs Greyburne that ſhe ſpoke.

All ſuſpicion of his lordſhip being thus done away, and Conſtance having explained the affair at Mr.

Mr. Aiſtrey's, excuſed her parting with the picture and her being ſeen with Captain Berneil, ſhe was by all preſent ſolicited to that which ſhe had no inclination to refuſe, and ſaw herſelf once more the choſen wife of him ſhe preferred to all the world.

It grew very late before they parted: Lord Calorne conſigned Miſs Fitzarthur to Mr. Gaynham's care, engaged to be with them at nine the next morning, and departed, with an injunction from Conſtance to return her the picture.

The hour of reſt was the firſt interval after this unexpected meeting, in which ſhe could collect herſelf, and a retroſpect of the day's events was more than ſhe could calmly bear; but whatever were her preſent enjoyment and future hopes, ſhe was not ſo blinded as to be ignorant of the alloy which her pleaſures, in common with thoſe of all her fellow-creatures, carried with them. She ſaw many evils impending, ſuch as would, when ſhe was leſs depreſſed by adverſity, have made her ſhudder; but now accepting them was relief, and ſhe was obliged to face them, or renounce all the advantages that ſoftened them.

Lord Calorne's income conſiſted of a ſmall eſtate, his profeſſional pay, and an allowance from his father; in all he had £ 1000 a year; but then his dependance on Lord Ormington was far more than the half of his annual receipts, and ſhe could not flatter herſelf that the Earl would, in her reduced circumſtances, conſent to his ſon's marrying her. The

conſequence of his reſentment would probably be withdrawing his voluntary bounty, and thus depriving them of the means of happineſs, as ſo ſtraitened, it was not poſſible to exclude painful anxiety. She did not wiſh for abundance but for eaſe, and ſuch a ſituation as would exempt Lord Calorne from more than ordinary cares: his peace of mind was eſſential to her own, and ſhe with grief perceived that their union, though it might annihilate one ſpecies of ſuffering, would be productive of another, from which they could not extricate themſelves.

Yet what was her alternative?—could ſhe, by any means diſpel this gathering ſtorm?—would her ſtill refuſing him leſſen what ſhe feared for him?—Certainly not?—for, believing him ſincere in ſaying, that his happineſs could be founded only in their marriage, and judging by the viſible effect their ſeparation had wrought in him, ſhe inſured him poſitive evil to eſcape that which was contingent, and which though ſhe could not obviate it, ſhe might diminiſh by aſſiduity, and render tolerable by participation.

In the concluſion, that ſhe erred leaſt on this ſide ſhe was aware that her inclination ſpoke firſt; but as her reaſon did not controvert her opinion, and told her that the magnitude of what ſhe dreaded would in a great degree depend on herſelf, ſhe hoped Lord Ormington's conduct juſtified an act of diſobedience in ſuch a ſon, and that what ſhe and

Lord

Lord Calorne had undergone, would enhance a moderate into a liberal ſhare of bleſſing, and be accepted as an excuſe for their temerity.

CHAP. XIX.

DISSUASION.

BEFORE nine o'clock the next morning, Lord Calorne came, and Conſtance, who was ready to receive him, ran down to the parlour, he met her at the door, and ſhe was ſhocked by perceiving that he looked conſiderably worſe than the preceding day. After having anſwered his queries, ſhe told him ſhe was ſure that either ſomething unfortunate had happened, or that he was ill, for that his countenance declared it. He wrung her hand, turned from her, and then, as if recovering from ſome ſudden emotion, he replied with a forced ſmile. 'To tell you the truth, I have been a horrid rake, for I have not been in bed all night;' what had paſſed in the day would have kept a perſon in the laſt ſtage of a lethargy awake: ſo I ſpared myſelf the trouble of

riſing this morning-'—This account did not ſatisfy her, yet ſhe did not chuſe to be inquiſitive, and remained ſilent on the ſubject.

'The ſtyle of his converſation now alarmed her; it was incoherent and melancholy, and ſhe began ſeriouſly to fear all was not right. She wiſhed that Lady Harriet or Mr. Gaynham would come down, as they might diſcover more than ſhe could, and, after a few minutes, her apprehenſions encreaſing, ſhe would have ſent to inquire if either of them was ſtirring, but Lord Calorne prevented her; ſhe then repeated her ſuſpicion that he was ill or unhappy and earneſtly begged that ſhe might ſhare his affliction: he anſwered, that he was almoſt out of the reach of any worldly calamity as he ſhould think none ſuch that did not ſeparate him from her.—And that ſaid ſhe, you have ſurely no cauſe to fear.—He made no reply; but appeared ſtill more uneaſy,—Lord Calorne, ſhe continued, I muſt know what it is that diſturbs you, or you muſt tell me I have no intereſt in what affects you; perhaps you are not ſatisfied with reſpect to the doubts you entertained yeſterday; only mention what particular you wiſh to have explained, and I will, as far as I am able remove your uneaſineſs.—I ſhould be incredulous indeed, he returned, or unworthy the trouble you have taken, if I were not fully ſatisfied with your conduct and your vindication; you do me injuſtice if you can ſuppoſe me ſo unjuſt:—but you *fancy* you perceive ſomething ſtrange in me; it is only your imagination;

gination : do not think of it and you will find you were miſtaken.—No, ſhe anſwered, I am ſure I am not miſtaken ; and I believe I can account for it myſelf, ſince you are ſo reſerved ; indeed you have cauſe to be unhappy ; and if you already feel it ſo ſenſibly, what will it be when it is aggravated ; you are reaſonably afraid of Lord Ormington's anger and the effects of it ; I ſee and have ruminated on the imprudence of our coming together : let us try if we cannot reſt contented with our reconciliation, or wait better times ; for Heaven's ſake let us do nothing to repent of. Do not talk ſo, he interrupted ; I know what my father can do ; he can not totally ruin me, and I will brave all the evils conſequent on our marriage, if I can ward them off you ; you muſt not teaze yourſelf with conjecture.

At this inſtant came in one of Mr. Gaynham's ſervants, looking round the room, Miſs Fitzarthur aſked him whom he wanted ; he ſaid he was ſeeking his maſter, and Lord Calorne pettiſhly bid him go and ſeek him elſewhere. He preſently returned, begging pardon for his rudeneſs, excuſed it by ſaying he could not find his maſter, and giving Conſtance a letter deſired her to let Mr. Gaynham have it as ſoon at he came down : he was proceeding to tell her, that *his lordſhip was not at home and that therefore he had brought the letter back*, when Lord Calorne ordered him to leave the room and ſnatched the paper out of Conſtance's hand : but not quick enough to prevent her ſeeing that it was di-

rected by him to Lord Farnford. This diſcovery and Lord Calorne's behaviour on it terrified her exceſſively; it was eaſy to gueſs the import of the letter, though he had hitherto ſtifled his reſentment more effectually than ſhe had expected, and in a moment all that occupied his mind, the cauſe of the melancholy ſhe had obſerved in him, and the whole of his intentions were developed.

He would now have quitted the room, but ſhe ſtood between him and the door and would not let him paſs her. Tell me, ſaid ſhe trembling, what does that letter to Lord Farnford contain? why do you write to him; do not aſk me, he replied, you ſhall know at ſome other time; it is private buſineſs. I know what it is ſaid, ſhe, and you ſhall not leave me till you give it me. Nonſenſe! he rejoined, with a half ſmile, you muſt let me go, Miſs Fitzarthur; you would not make me a priſoner! I will come back in a few minutes, only let me aſk the ſervant a queſtion. You ſhall aſk no queſtions till you have ſatisfied me, ſhe returned, at the ſame time locking the door and taking out the key, you are mad, and will make me completely miſerable. Anſwer me; is not that letter a challenge? Well, ingenuouſly it is, ſaid his lordſhip. Good God exclaimed Conſtance, what creatures are men! How far ſhort of what you profeſs, my Lord, muſt your love for me be! and how ungratefully do you receive what you yeſterday thought or ſaid, you

though:

thought a bleſſing. We have not been twenty-four hours reſtored to each other, and relieved from intolerable anxiety, and you would now quit me, probably for ever, and leave me eternally wretched; for I am reſponſible for the conſequences of this action? had I known how little command you had of yourſelf, I would rather have remained ſuſpected and deſpiſed than have vindicated myſelf, ſince I muſt now be involved in guilt. The tears guſhed from her eyes; Lord Calorne led her to her ſeat, and endeavoured temperately to convince her that he could act no otherwiſe than he did, and that ſhe muſt be ſatisfied, he ſaid that, whatever was the event, ſhe was perfectly innocent; that if it was a crime, he alone was the criminal, that ſhould he ſurvive, he meant not to fly inquiry, and that there was no law either of God or man that obliged him to bear ſuch injuries without reſenting them; that were Lord Farnford ſuffered to eſcape with impunity, his villainy would be authorized and encouraged, and that he who would not fight for her was a wretch unworthy her regard.

How can you ſay, ſhe replied, when he pauſed and again inſiſted on her releaſing him, that no law of God or man forbids your revenging yourſelf? is the magnitude of the offence conſidered where forgiveneſs is inculcated? are we not expreſly told that we are to forgive all offences, however great, or how often ſoever repeated: and will you dare to

puniſh what omnipotent ſpares (O Lord Calorne, ſuch ſophiſtry is beneath you : ſhew a true ſpirit of Chriſtianity and tell Lord Farnford you pardon him in this he could not equal you : in reſentment he may be your ſuperior. I cannot, anſwered he : were the injury done to myſelf, or were it of any other ſpecies did it affect all the world, excepting you, I would forgive it, but this I cannot, nor can he expect it. I do not preſume to puniſh what Omnipotence ſpares ; I may be the inſtrument of it's vengeance, and you may be wrong in oppoſing me —You do not think ſo, I am ſure, ſhe rejoined, and you have deprived yourſelf of the power of judging. Not entirely, ſaid he, but I cannot withſtand irreſiſtible impulſe, nor ought you to deſire me to ſubmit tamely : what degree of protection could you hope for from a man who is perpetually awed by fears ? let me firſt deſerve and then claim you. Mr. Gaynham acquieſces in the neceſſity, and we did not intend you to have known of it till it was over.

Then never, replied Conſtance, will I believe that you ſincerely love me—you prefer revenge to every other conſideration, and could ſee me reduced to the ſtate of dependance and danger from which I am ſcarcely reſcued, for the pleaſure of indulging your reſentment. God forbid my being ſo baſe, he exclaimed, I will, if I leave you for ever, place you in ſecurity ; I have made every neceſſary diſpoſi-

tion

tion and the little I can call my own when I fall is yours: do not reproach me with unkindneſs; my laſt wordly care ſhall be for you: my brother will be a brother to you; and from Harriet's affection you may demand every thing; your diſtreſs encreaſes the conflict I ſuffer, but it cannot conquer my reſolution. And do you think, ſhe aſked, that were your abilities ten thouſand times what they are, you could leave me any compenſation? do you believe me ſo ſelfiſh as to regard my own ſecurity alone? or ſo depraved to be capable of enjoying any comfort under ſuch an affliction? What a heart muſt you have! to abandon me! to deprive me of every bleſſing I had fondly hoped for! to ſuffer me to be pointed out as the occaſion of a fellow-creature's death! to load my conſcience with ſo heinous a crime, and to riſque breaking your ſiſter's heart! for I am certain you have not Lady Harriet's concurrence.—She is ignorant of my deſign, he anſwered, and muſt continue ſo; I would not on any conſideration have her informed of it. But ſhe ſhall be informed of it, replied Conſtance, and ſhe ſhall join my entreaties, perhaps you will attend to her; for you love *her*; *me* you do not I am convinced.

Can you doubt my love for you? ſaid Lord Calorne, you ſhould conſider this as the ſtrongeſt proof of it I can give; did I not love you I ſhould not be deſirous of puniſhing this villain. Then tell

me,

me, ſhe rejoined, what you reſolve on---will you ſend this challenge to Lord Farnford? Undoubtedly, he anſwered, and I conjure you not to try to divert me from my purpoſe.——Then I will tell you replied Miſs Fitzarthur, what I am reſolved on; notwithſtanding we are ſolemnly engaged to each other, and that I make no ſcruple to confeſs the whole happineſs of my life depends on my being united to you. As I hope for pardon of my ſins, and to ſhare in the benefits of our redemption, when you quit me to meet Lord Farnford, for this barbarous purpoſe, you ſhall bid me an eternal adieu; ſo whether you fall or conquer will be indifferent to me: the hand ſtained with the blood of a fellow-creature ſhall never plight your faith to me, nor will I ever receive a murderer for my huſband; you muſt Lord Calorne, renounce me or your intention———Really he interrupted, you magnify the danger, I will accept ſatisfaction ſhort of his life; —the conſequences may not be fatal to either of us.——Whether they are or are not, ſhe replied, the intention conſtitutes the crime, and the interpoſition of the power whoſe laws you deſpiſe, though it may make your remorſe leſs pungent, will not acquit you;—if you challenge Lord Farnford, ſhould my heart break, it ſhall not yield.—I will never ſee you again.——I muſt riſque it, he ſaid, I do not think you will refuſe me. Then you are yet to learn my diſpoſition, returned Conſtance; my

my affection for you does not at all bind my reaſon; you will be totally changed, and your better-ſelf would hate me for accepting you in your fallen ſtate. Good God! Lord Calorne, a murderer! Lord Calorne to ſtand a trial at the bar of a court of juſtice for murder! to have no appeal to his own conſcience! to be rejected by his mediator; to ſhudder, ſtart, and turn pale at the horrors of his mind! How can you bear to think on it? And you have not even the excuſe of ſudden anger: is it long ſince the event happened which has called forth your reſentment, and ſince you have known it I am ſure you have deliberated on it: it is ſettled revenge, and, if you execute it, you doom me to wretchedneſs and yourſelf to eternal puniſhment.

And ſo, ſaid his lordſhip, you are determined to conquer at any rate, and I muſt give up to you: I cannot loſe you and ſelf-approbation at once, and we muſt think of ſubſtituting ſomething inſtead of this ſatisfaction.———Then give me the letter, returned Conſtance, and promiſe me you will ſend no other, nor any meſſage of the ſame import.—I will promiſe, he replied, that I will ſend none that has not your approbation; but what will you give me for my condeſcenſion. All that is in my power, ſaid ſhe, every moment of my life ſhall teſtify my ſenſe of your merit, and my gratitude for your kind conſideration of me, and over and above all, ſhe continued, ſmiling at him, I will give you your liberty:

liberty: pray unlock the door, for if Lady Harriet ſhould come down ſhe will wonder what is the matter-—But, indeed Miſs Fitzarthur, ſaid Lord Calorne, I would adviſe you to think of having any thing rather than a ſoldier, ſuppoſe, for change of air I were to try a campaign in America, what would become of me if you had all your preſent fears? you would diſſuade me from doing my duty.—When I do or attempt it, ſhe replied, then reproach me, hate me, and deſert me: as far I as am permitted I will follow you: and when we muſt part, not one mumur ſhall eſcape my lips, nor ſhall you ever hear me complain of my lot: my prayers ſhall accompany you and I will with confidence reſign you to the care of Heaven, ſatisfied that you are acting your part well, and that if you fall fighting for your king and country, greater felicity awaits you than you could have enjoyed here: No, if you call me a coward you traduce me:— I hope I am only ſo in a bad cauſe.— You will teach me true magnanimity, ſaid Lord Calorne, catching her to his boſom: I may ſafely truſt that you will never aſk me to depart from my character, and I will implicitly obey you.—But what ſatisfaction may I inſiſt on Lord Farnford's making me? That I leave to you to determine, ſhe replied: I dare ſay you have been ſo much occupied with this meditated revenge that you have forgotten your promiſe to reſtore me the picture.— He ſaid he had not: produced and gave it to her.

PHAP.

CHAP. XX.

BOUNTY.

HER fears were juſt allayed when Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet joined them: he looked more thoughtful than uſual, ſhe uncommonly gay and chearful. That ſomething had agitated Miſs Fitzarthur her countenance proclaimed, and her ladyſhip kindly expreſſed her hope that it could not be any unpleaſing circumſtance:—We would not diſturb you, ſaid ſhe, becauſe we thought, my brother might wiſh to ſpeak to you alone, and I ſuppoſe by this time all is ſettled—when is it to be?

Conſtance did not think it prudent to tell Lady Harriet what had been the ſubject of their converſation, as informing her of it could only alarm her; ſhe therefore aſſumed a ſmile, and, inſtead of anſwering her, ſhewed her Lord Calorne's picture, that ſhe might judge of the likeneſs.——In the mean times Conſtance perceived that Mr. Gaynham was hearing of her victory, with which his frequent glances towards her manifeſted he was not

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diſcontented; and ſoon after, paſſing behind her, while his wife and her brother were in converſation, he whiſpered;—You owe me a courteſy, for I ſent James in with the blundering meſſage, in hopes your curioſity would be awakened.

The grand queſtion was debated at breakfaſt, as till that point was ſettled, Lord Calorne, ſaid he, could not turn his thoughts to any other buſineſs, and the Saturday next, but one following, was fixed on and agreed to for the wedding; this afforded an interval of no more than ten days, during which Miſs Fitzarthur was to remain with Lady Harriet and Mr. Gaynham, who undertook to be reſponſible for her ſafety. The next thing to be conſidered was, in what manner Lord Ormington, with whom his ſon had never yet come to an open breach, ſhould be treated, and his filial duty made him propoſe going to him immediately, taking no notice of the diſcovery Miſs Greyburne had made, but acquainting him, that his marriage with Conſtance was reſolved on, and aſking his acquieſcence.

At noon he ſet out, and before he came back, Conſtance had the pleaſure of a letter from Mr. Carwell, which added to her happineſs, by acquainting her with his; ſhe immediately began an anſwer to it, to inform him of the alteration in her views and to acknowledge him as the occaſion of it; but ſhe forbore concluding her letter, till ſhe had heard from Lord Calorne, how his father had received the news of his intended marriage.

On

On his return to dinner, ſhe did not dare to aſk what his ſucceſs had been, nor was it neceſſary when ſhe looked at him, for vexation was engraven in every feature. He threw himſelf on a chair, and ſaid to her,—Now, Miſs Fitzarthur, fortune has done her worſt,—I am not diſappointed, but I own I feel pain, in ſeeing what I had imagined realized.—Let us hear how you were received, I beg, ſaid Mr. Gaynham; much, I ſuppoſe, as all applications from me have been.—No, replied Lord Calorne, I had a patient hearing; I was ſuffered for more than an hour to remonſtrate, to urge, and to entreat, and all to no purpoſe; for this as nearly as I can recollect was my father's anſwer. Sir! when I conſented to your *addreſſing* this Miſs Fitzarthur, for mind I never conſented poſitively to your *marrying* her, it was under a full perſuaſion that ſhe had a proper fortune;—you have been taken in, and I would releaſe you if you would let me.—I ſay you ſhall marry Mr. Ecklow's daughter, and you may do it very well, notwithſtanding this wonderful paſſion of your's.—He told me peremptorily he would not agree to my requeſt, and has in the heat of his rage ſworn; that on the day of our marriage all intercourſe with him ſhall ceaſe; what he has hitherto allowed me to enable me to ſupport my rank is from that moment to be withheld, and he declares open hoſtility;—but yet this is felicity compared with it's alternative, and I accept it as ſuch.

This

This repulſe, though ſhe was warned to expect it, was a heavy mortification to Conſtance; ſhe was unwilling that Lord Calorne ſhould ſee it affected her, and, her heart being too full to ſay a word ſhe went up to her room. Lady Harriet ſoon came to her, and while ſhe acknowledged the reaſonableneſs of her ſorrow, ſhe aſſured her that nothing on her parts or on that of Mr. Gaynham ſhould be wanting to alleviate it.—If you can, ſaid ſhe, reſt contented without my father's approbation and be ſatisfied with all the world beſide, every thing elſe I am ſure can be made eaſy; our fortune is more than ſufficient for the maintenance of our family, and I will take on me to anſwer for Mr. Gaynham, that he will think any part of it well beſtowed if it is to purchaſe peace and happineſs for thoſe ſo dear to him and me.

She could not prevail on Lady Harriet to leave her when they were called to dinner, and therefore went down with her; Lord Calorne had by this time regained the command of his features, and now told her chearfully that ſhe had heard the worſt news firſt, for that he had not informed her of half the buſineſs he had done in his abſence.

I went, ſaid he, from my father's in ſearch of Captain Berneil's. whom I found patroling St. James's-ſtreet: he did not in the leaſt ſuſpect my errand, and very willingly accompanied me to a private room in the coffee-houſe. I then told him, I inſiſted on his making ſome acknowledgment for

for

the inſult he had offered Miſs Fitzarthur, and that this ſhould be aſking her pardon: he was not obſtinate, ſaid that if writing would ſatisfy me he would inſtantly comply, but that he was *aſhamed* to face you.——And I hope you let him off ſo, ſaid Conſtance.——No indeed, replied her champion; I cannot underſtand that to be *ſhame* which only oppoſes a man's doing what he ought; he was not *aſhamed* to inſult you ſcandalouſly, and his modeſty ſhall not now ſtand in his way.—I made him go with me to Bedford-row, but the family are at Bath. Mr. Aiſtrey is ſo ill that his recovery is not expected, and Miſs, with her thirty thouſand pounds any day of the week, has run away with a ſharper who impoſed himſelf on her for a foreign nobleman, ſo that Berneil ſhall write to Mrs. Aiſtrey and he has promiſed to be here this evening to make his ſubmiſſion to you.—And muſt I ſee him? Conſtance aſked;—you puniſh me as well as him, for I ſhould be grieved at putting a gentleman, eſpecially of his profeſſion, in ſo humiliating a ſituation.——He ſhall come, Lord Calorne replied, but if you do not choſe to ſee him, you may leave a diſpenſation with the ſervant.——This ſhe preferred, and therefore wrote a note for him, telling him ſhe was ſatisfied and forgave the inſult.

What Lord Calorne had done was approved by all; he then ſuggeſted a wiſh to ſpeak to Conſtance in the next room, they went thither, and he ſaid to her,

her.——Now as to the ſubmiſſion that Farnford muſt make:—have you thought of it?——No, anſwered Conſtance, and I ſhould be better pleaſed if you would not think of it.——Then I ſubmit to *him*, rejoined Lord Calorne. I cannot do that;—he may exult indeed: it muſt not be; after having run away with my Helen, he muſt at leaſt own the injury; may I not threaten him into an acknowledgment? I give you my word that, if he will write properly to you, for I will not aſk any humiliation to myſelf, I will no farther reſent his conduct; but if I do not annex ſome puniſhment in caſe of diſobedience, I cannot expect his compliance. Do as you think beſt, ſhe replied;—you know my ſentiments and my reſolution. Then, ſaid he, let me have your opinion of the requiſition I have ſketched; if you do not approve it, write it yourſelf, and I will tranſcribe it. He then gave it her in theſe words:

It is Miſs Fitzarthur's wiſh that I ſhould not reſent the many inſults and injuries ſhe has received from Lord Farnford; in this generous forbearance I have acquieſced *conditionally*, and it depends on him to render my acquieſcence *abſolute*. I have told her, that if he will, in a letter to her, acknowledge and apologize for his paſt indefencible conduct towards her, I will be ſatisfied; but, if he refuſes or withholds this ſubmiſſion, I muſt endeavour by other means to convince him and the world, that no one ſhall affront Miſs Fitzarthur with impunity.

'I am, &c.

'CALORNE.'

'*P. S.* Miſs Fitzarthur is now, and will for ſome days be at Mr. Gaynham's, New Burlington-ſtreet.'

To this Conſtance could make no reaſonable objection; though ſhe would have been as well contented without Lord Farnford's making any ſubmiſſion, ſhe ſaw he who required it would not, and therefore, hoping that this ſatisfaction would not be refuſed, ſhe declared herſelf willing that it ſhould be required in the form propoſed.

CHAP. XXI.

WARNING.

AT the hour named, Captain Berneil, came and received his diſpenſation; the remainder of the evening Lord Calorne wiſhed ſhould be devoted to the final adjuſtment of their plan, and all other company was excluded.

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The time for the wedding was appointed, and it was agreed that it ſhould be neither affectedly public nor private: Miſs Fitzarthur was to be introduced to Lady Harriet's friends as her future ſiſter, and the family were to go together to Mr. Gaynham's houſe at Oatham, about twenty miles from town, as ſoon as the ceremony was over.

Lady Harriet was very earneſt that no delay might be hazarded by poſtponing giving neceſſary directions. Thanks to our poverty, replied her brother, we have little preparation to make; nothing more needs be done than to ſecure Miſs Fitzarthur againſt the conſequences of any accident to me, and this I hope will be eaſily effected. I have been adviſing with Mr. Gaynham whether I ſhall not go to Miſs Ecklow this evening and carry her the joyful tidings of being rid of me.———Are you ſure, Conſtance aſked, that they will be joyful tidings?—Certainly, ſaid his lordſhip, for I believe I am the only impediment to her marrying my Lieutenant-Colonel. I wiſh that I could prevail on her father to let Derville have her handſomely; I intend to offer her my ſervices, in the way of perſuaſion, after you and I are married, perhaps when the old gentleman finds 'I'll none of her,' he may hear reaſon.———Lord Calorne then, having jocularly made Conſtance aſſure him ſhe was not afraid to truſt him with her rival, told her he could not ſee her again till the morning, and bid her adieu.

Be-

Before ſhe retired to reſt, ſhe received the following affectionate card;

'Lord Ormington's compliments to Miſs Fitzarthur, and adviſes her, ſince ſhe does not mind the injury ſhe is doing his ſon by holding him to a raſh promiſe, to think how ſhe is to ſupport her title when Lord Calorne's regiment is reduced to half-pay; an event which will undoubtedly take place at the end of the war.'

For ſome minutes after ſhe had read this parental epiſtle ſhe doubted whether ſhe underſtood it; Lord Calorne, ſhe knew had a commiſſion in the foot guards, and it required no great ſkill in military affairs to determine it improbable that either of thoſe regiments would be put on half-pay; but that which aſtoniſhed her moſt was the malevolence of this adviſe, and ſhe was as much hurt by the temper it indicated as ſhe could have been by the event it foretold.

She ſhewed the card to Lady Harriet, who begged her not to let Lord Calorne ſee it. Mr. Gaynham anſwered her requeſt to know if there was any poſſible truth in it by ſaying there was no danger of an end to the war; but, not being fully ſatisfied, ſhe reſolved to put the queſtion to Lord Calorne.

She did ſo when ſhe next ſaw him, and he, after expreſſing his wonder and ſorrow at his father's unkindneſs, owned to her that during their ſepara-

tion, finding himſelf wretched in a life of inaction, and diſturbed by occaſionally meeting her, he had quitted the guards and bought into a regiment then under orders for America; but had been diſappointed as the orders were countermanded. He candidly ſtated to her the ſtraitneſs of his finances, bid her conſider that Lord Ormington had it in his power totally to diſinherit him, and offered to releaſe her from her engagement if the proſpect terrified her. She again referred it to him to do that which would moſt contribute to his peace; and he preferred poverty with her, to competence without her: ſhe remained firm in her firſt purpoſe, and diſregarded the intimidation. Mr. Gaynham and Lady Harriet joined in aſſurances that they would omit nothing that could render their ſituation comfortable; an union of families was agreed on, and the matter diſmiſſed.

Theſe occurrences did not afford that kind of pleaſure which contemplation increaſes, and when Miſs Fitzarthur ſat down to aſk herſelf calmly whether ſhe was right in conſenting to marry Lord Calorne on ſuch terms and under ſuch circumſtances ſhe was embarraſſed: ſhe ſaw that he muſt act not only in oppoſition to, but openly in defiance of his father, and that for her ſake he renounced the means of living even with decent propriety; thus ſhe was repaying his love for her by involving him in inextricable difficulties, and in poſitive diſobedience

ence to Lord Ormington: Yet what could ſhe do, even if ſelf-conſideration were put out of the queſtion, that would render Lord Calorne leſs unhappy. To retract her promiſe was impoſſible; ſhe was engaged by every tie of honour, gratitude, and perſonal regard, and could not recede without including herſelf in the deſcription of thoſe who 'ſtrain at a gnat and ſwallow a camel.'

This was the firſt deliberate act of her choice in which ſhe had ſuffered the voice of paſſion to overcome that of her reaſon; and inſtead of ruminating on her preſent ſituation, ſhe was forced to ſoothe her apprehenſions by hoping that Lord Ormington's reſentment would in time be appeaſed, and that, by circumſpection, and duty in the behaviour of his ſon and herſelf, it was probable that a reconciliation might, when he conſidered that his views were irremediably diſappointed, be effected.

She wrote to Mr. Carwell a true account of her proſpects, her fears, and her feelings, and, had it not been too late, would have aſked his adviſe; but now it would have been a nugatory compliment, as ſhe had neither ſpace of time nor ſufficient reſolution to follow any that did not agree with her intentions: ſhe however candidly confeſſed to him that ſhe was ſinning with her eyes open, and that the moſt ſhe could expect, even from thoſe who judged favourable of her conduct, was an allowance that the miſery ſhe had undergone was an extenuation of her offence.

It was now Saturday: and just as Lord Calorne came in to dinner, Constance received the following note from her old friend the Earl of Farnford:

'MADAM, Saturday, 3 P. M.

'On my return from Mount Felix this 'morning, I met an angry command from Lord 'Calorne to acknowledge and apologize to you for 'insults and injuries which you have suffered from 'me. I will not dispute the propriety of these terms; 'but must say that had his lordship required this 'submission to be made to himself, I would person-'ally have refused it. To you, Madam, I find in 'myself no reluctance to own my temerity, and to 'the world shall stand excused when it is considered 'that a passion for Miss Fitzarthur was the cause of 'it.

'I am, Madam, with great respect,

'Your most obedient servant,

'FARNFORD,'

So prompt an acquiescence was more than Constance had hoped for; and she made Lord Calorne acknowledge it satisfactory. It gave her pleasure, as it removed her fears both with regard to him for whose safety she was interested, and him who made her doubt her own; the utmost she had expected was an equivocal apology; but this was such as no one could reject, and the terms in which it was conveyed, indicated that whatever resentment Lord Farnford bore her, ceased to exist.

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But, notwithſtanding one ſource of her anxiety was ſtopped, it was impoſſible for her to be chearful during the evening; the converſation turned on Lord Ormington's obduracy; her reaſon was at war with her ſtrongeſt affections, and all that Lord Calorne ſaid could not ſatisfy her that ſhe was juſtifiable in acting againſt parental authority.

CHAP. XXII.

MANOEUVRE.

THE week in which Conſtance was either to ſeal her condemnation to miſery, or to inſure happineſs, began; and though cheared a little by the reception ſhe met with from thoſe who were to be her relations, and by knowing that Lord Ormington would ſtand ſingle in oppoſition to her, his warning had ſo impreſſed her that ſhe dreaded the approaching Saturday, and was tormented by fear,

by reflection, and by the cenſure of her heart: her ſpirits grew hourly more oppreſſed: and, fond as ſhe was of the ſociety ſhe was with, ſhe preferred ſitting alone, when Lord Calorne was abſent. Solitude increaſed the conflict in her mind, and laid open to her view the probable conſequences of the engagement ſhe was about to enter into, arrayed in their leaſt pleaſing colours. It was not the loſs of the uſual appendages to ſuch a ſituation as her's was to be, it was not the fear that ſhe ſhould be debarred from the gaiety of rank and fortune, that diſturbed her; it was the loſs of ſelf-approbation, and the fear that ſhe was an inducement with Lord Calorne to diſregard important conſiderations. A gloom hung over her, which he alone could, for even a moment, diſpel; ſhe felt a laſſitude and a reluctance to whatever turned to the grand object, that ſhe could neither reaſonably account for, nor by any means get rid of; and on the Wedneſday evening, when the legal part of the buſineſs was completed, ſhe ſuffered as much from her undeſcribable ſenſations as many a criminal on the arrival of his death warrant.

Nothing was omitted by Lord Calorne, Lady Harriet, or Mr. Gaynham that could remove a dejection which was too apparent to be hidden; but all relief was temporary and tranſient; ſhe had loſt that equanimity of temper that had carried her through all her troubles, and at the moment when they

they ſhould have ceaſed, they were more inſupportable than ever: any little noiſe terrified her, ſhe ſtarted if the door opened, and a ſeparation for a quarter of an hour from any of the family was preceded by as ſolemn a farewell as that for an India voyage. The time dragged on heavily, yet flew too faſt and had not Lady Harriet perpetually exhorted and often aſſiſted her, ſhe would neither have bought, choſen, nor ordered her wedding cloaths.

She involuntary communicated a portion of her melancholy to Lord Calorne, though it ſhewed itſelf in him differently: he was driving time on; hurrying every preparation, and in cauſeleſs fear of what delay might produce. Much of his leiſure was ſpent at his father's and at Mr. Ecklow's, but, as he never mentioned what was the purpoſe or reſult of any of the viſits, Conſtance ceaſed to hope any alteration in her favour.

Amongſt Mr. Gaynham's relations was an old Lady who had diſcovered a particular attachment to Miſs Fitzarthur, and was very anxious for her becoming a member of the family; her name alſo was Gaynham, and being too infirm to leave her houſe with convenience, ſhe had two ſucceſſive evenings, ſent her chair and ſervants to fetch Conſtance for the pleaſure of an hour's converſation with her, and had prevailed on Mr. Gaynham to defer ſetting out on Saturday for Oatham till as late an hour as would be ſafe, that ſhe might have their company

to dinner at her houſe. She was a woman of fortune, of a diſpoſition that commanded love and reverence, and ſo amiable in Conſtance's eyes that this cloſe connexion would have been perfectly agreeable to her, but for the low ſtate of her own ſpirits, and the ſituation of Mrs. Gaynham's houſe, which was next door to Lord Farnford's in Portman-ſquare; from this circumſtance, however, little real uneaſineſs aroſe, Mrs. Gaynham did not viſit his family, and, though Conſtance had been with her at many intervals, ſhe had only once had a glimpſe of his lordſhip. If this vicinity could have produced any thing diſagreeable, it's continuance would not have been long, for this week was fixed on for Mrs. Gaynham's remove to a diſtant part of the town, and, for the ſake of entertaining Lord Calorne and his bride with eaſe in her new habitation, ſhe propoſed ſleeping there on Thurſday night; this was her reſolution on Wedneſday, when Lady Harriet and Conſtance called on her.

On Thurſday at noon, Lord Calorne came to Burlington-ſtreet, ſaid he ſhould dine at Mr. Ecklow's, and went away, after having ſat ſcarcely a quarter of an hour with his dejected Conſtance.—— Preſently after, there came a meſſage from Mrs. Gaynham that ſhe would ſend her chair about nine that evening for Miſs Fitzarthur, as ſhe had ſomething of importance to ſay to her, ſhe promiſed to be ready, and inquired of the ſervant if ſhe was to

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ſee her in Portman-ſquare or in her new houſe; the man replied that his Miſtreſs would be in Portman-ſquare, for that ſhe was hindered from moving till the next day.

It was nearly half paſt nine when the chair came, and ſhe did not feel much inclined to go; but ſhe could not evade it, and Lady Harriet, after many exhortations to come home ſoon, parted from her. in paſſing by St. ———'s church, ſhe was ſtopped by a great crowd at the door; ſhe aſked the ſervant what was the occaſion of it, and, hearing it was a wedding, ſat very patiently till the way was cleared; there were two or three carriages waiting, and, the days being almoſt of the longeſt, it was, though duſk, light enough for her to diſcern that one of them was Lord Calorne's. She ſtarted when ſhe ſaw it, but a moment's recollection explained the circumſtance; ſhe ſuppoſed ſome friend of his was to be married, and was ſurprized only at his not having mentioned it when he called in the morning, as ſhe could not imagine there could be any ſecret in ſo public a wedding.

She had juſt ſettled this point to her ſatisfaction by concluding he had forgotten it, when ſhe entered Portman-ſquare, and a gentleman, who at that inſtant paſſed her, ran up to the door where her chairmen ſtopped, and knocked at it; it was immediately opened, ſhe entered the hall and was getting out of the chair, when he ſtept before her, and exclaimed,—Thank heaven for my ſucceſs!—once

more welcome to my arms.—The wonder, the terror, this action occaſioned, was doubled by the inſtantaneous recognition of Lord Farnford's voice, her powers of utterance forſook her, and ſhe ſtruggled to diſengage herſelf from his hold, but he would not quit her. Recovering from her firſt ſurprize, ſhe aſked him what he meant, and threatened, if he did not looſe her, to alarm the family; —he deſired her not to be frightned, and to come into the parlour, for he wanted to talk to her.— She replied that ſhe muſt go up ſtairs to Mrs. Gaynham who had ſent for her,—at which he laughed, and ſaid coolly;—ſhe will not want you yet, I will anſwer for her;—come with me.—I will not, ſhe returned, and if you do not chuſe to let me go, I muſt beg that Mrs. Gaynham may be told how I am detained.—It was aſtoniſhing to her, that although the chairmen, the footman, and the ſervant who opened the door were in the hall and heard what was ſaid, no one ſeemed to attend to her; ſhe deſiring one of them to let Mrs. Gaynham know how ſhe was ſituated, when Lord Farnford ſeizing both her hands compelled her to go into the parlour, the door of which was immediately ſhut.

She now ſuſpected he had ſecured the aſſiſtance of thoſe whom ſhe had ſeen in the hall, and, as ſhe was certain Mrs. Gaynham would not permit ſuch an inſult on her, ſhe ſprang from Lord Farnford and pulled the bell violently; he laughed at her, and throwing himſelf on a chair with the utmoſt col-

collection and eaſe, ſaid,—If I had known you wanted any thing I would have rung the bell for you.

It then occurred to her that he might mean only to frighten her; turning round towards him to gather his purpoſe from his countenance, ſhe diſcovered what her fright had yet concealed from her, that ſhe was not in Mrs. Gaynham's houſe. Terrified exceſſively at this evidence that his intentions were ſerious, ſhe exclaimed.—Good Heaven!—where am I?—what miſtake is this?———A laugh which his lordſhip did not endeavour to ſuppreſs, was the only reply he made.---Tell me, ſaid ſhe, where I am? whoſe houſe am I in? 'tis not Mrs. Gaynham's. You are perfectly right, he anſwered, 'tis not Mrs. Gaynham's; it was mine, it is now your's. How can you talk ſo abſurdly? ſaid ſhe; if this is not Mrs. Gaynham's houſe, why am I detained? ſhe ſent for me and I inſiſt on your ſuffering me to go to her, or you may repent your madneſs. Never, never, my love, replied his lordſhip, taking her hand. I will abide the conſequences of your ſtaying here; you and I muſt not part yet; do not think I am now to be awed by your threats; come, deſcend a little from the heroic, do not play tragedy any longer, you uſed me very ill when I had you in the country, and have uſed me very ill ever ſince, but if I loſe you now, I underſtand it will be for ever, and therefore it ſhall not be in your power to play me ſuch a trick

as you eſcaped me by.———And do you think, Conſtance aſked, retreating from him, that I will tamely ſubmit to remain your priſoner? Remain, not my priſoner but my ward, he replied, you muſt, till you chuſe to releaſe yourſelf by conſenting to what I ſhall requeſt; and I would adviſe you to ſubmit with patience, for I need not tell you, Miſs Fitzarthur, that here you are wholly in my power; no friendly window ſhall furniſh you with an opportunity of running away from me. I ſuppoſe you will give me as much trouble as poſſible; but I ſhall think none too great to accompliſh my purpoſe; I am proof againſt any thing you can ſay, and am, I truſt, ſecured againſt every thing you can do: and now, continued he, coming up to her with ſettled reſolution in his countenance, hear, and believe me ſincere, when I ſwear that you ſhall not quit this houſe before you have given me a right to inſiſt on your return to it; in ſhort, my adored Conſtance, it is my firm determination that as Miſs Fitzarthur you ſhall not go hence; when you have renounced that name I will be the firſt to reſtore your liberty, and if I fail in one or other of theſe points, may all the evils which mankind moſt anxiouſly ſhun fall on me ten fold.

An univerſal tremor now ſeized Conſtance; ſhe had no hope of reſiſting his intentions, and as little of eſcaping his violence; though ready to die

die with fear, ſhe called up her courage, and peremptorily anſwered: My Lord, you cannot force me to act againſt my nature, nor can you detain me here long; my friends know how you impriſoned me when you decoyed me into the country; my abſence will alarm them and lead them to ſuſpect you, and I cannot doubt their ſeeking me here; therefore, for your own ſake, it will be prudent to let me go.———I thank you for the hint, he rejoined;—I will endeavour to render their ſearch fruitleſs;—I can very eaſily do it.———Saying theſe words he left the room, and Conſtance heard him lock the door on the outſide. She now ſaw herſelf precluded from all means of averting the impending evil, which was much greater than when it before threatened her; then, as ſhe was irritated againſt Lord Calorne, her conduct only reſpected herſelf; but now her diſtreſs was aggravated by what he would ſuffer.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

ALTERNATIVE.

HER jailor was abſent near a quarter of an hour, which time ſhe employed in deviſing ſome method to divert him from his purpoſe, and prevail on him to liberate her. When he returned, he ſaid,—And ſo, Miſs Fitzarthur, you thought at your coming into this houſe that it was Mrs. Gaynham's.——I could not doubt it, ſhe replied, when ſhe had ſent for me:—ſhe will wonder what is become of me.——No, ſhe will not, ſaid his Lordſhip; ſhe is gone to her new dwelling; all the family left the houſe next to this at noon: it was I who ſent the meſſage; I have taken a ſervant ſhe has juſt diſcharged, and I borrowed her name: but come, continued he, ſeeing Conſtance was aſtoniſhed, do not let us loſe time in trifling explanations; you wiſh to get out of this houſe, and I would not detain you a moment longer than is neceſſary.—

I ſuppoſe by this came you are convinced that reſiſtance is vain, and I ſhall therefore deſire Mr. Metward may come in.

At the name of Metward ſhe ſtarted. Lord Farnford moved towards the door, when laying hold on him, ſhe begged to be heard: he returned, ſaying, You ſhall not tax me with cruelty, in refuſing to hear you, yet I muſt tell you that you deceive yourſelf, if you hope any thing you can ſay will perſuade me to deſiſt: my purpoſe cannot be ſhaken, I have ſworn to perſevere; your obſtinacy has driven me to extremities; however, I am ready to attend you.——You are unmoved, ſaid Conſtance, by knowing how greatly you diſtreſs me; but think of yourſelf; what can you expect from an union with one who would much rather die than be your wife?

It is but charity, interrupted Lord Farnford, to ſave your lungs and your ſpirits; you are preaching, my good Madam, to the winds; could ſuch conſiderations move me, I ſhould have aſſerted a falſity in ſaying I am reſolute; I know your ſex well enough to believe that riches, titles, and ſplendor will afford conſolation, and render a ſubmiſſion to neceſſity, however irkſome at firſt, ſupportable; and I know you well enough to be aſſured you will not ſtudiouſly make me unhappy. It is only becauſe I have no time to waſte, that I interrupt you; for I feel myſelf ſo fortified, againſt your rhetoric that I might

I might ſafely let you go on till you were weary: you cannot complain of my obſtinacy, when your own is as great: for you will not believe the inutility of all you can ſay; I have no more hope of prevailing on you by perſuaſion, than you have chance of ſucceeding with me in that way.—I am ſorry to be peremptory; I would moſt ſolicitouſly avoid whatever can occaſion you uneaſineſs, but it would be mocking you to conceal the means I am determined to uſe;—you ſhall not be denied an alternative, but you muſt decide immediately:—I have got a ſpecial licence and if you will conſent and give me your word, unequivocally, to accept my hand and heart to-morrow, the ceremony ſhall be properly performed, and in ſuch a manner as becomes both you and me;—if you, on the contrary, prefer reſiſtance, Mr- Metward is in the houſe and, whether you will ſpeak or not, he ſhall, without any delay, read the ſervice: you ſhall have no witneſſes of your ſtubborneſs and I ſhall leave it to you to prove, in the beſt manner you can, that you are not my wife.——If, by your rejection of my firſt propoſition, the latter becomes your choice, to-morrow morning we ſhall ſet off for the north, and you muſt not expect after ſuch behaviour that I ſhall be at all anxious to relieve the ſuſpence of your friends.———Speak, Miſs Fitz-

Fitzarthur, and tell me you will not oblige me to uſe ſeverity.

Conſtance returned no anſwer, for, almoſt choaked with rage and grief, ſhe was as unable to reply as ſhe was to chuſe. Lord Farnford ſaw her agitation increaſe; and, probably thinking it more prudent to uſe lenient meaſures than to riſque the ſucceſs of his enterprize, by endangering her ſenſes, he told her he would give her an hour to make her election; after that time, if ſhe remained ſilent, he muſt decide for her.

Encouraged by this unexpected reſpite, ſhe begged ſhe might be left alone. A petition that his Lordſhip did not ſeem very willing to grant. He ſaid he could hardly venture to truſt her by herſelf; however, if ſhe wiſhed his abſence, he would quit her, and ſend her ſervant to ſit with her. He did ſo, and left the room.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

AID.

LORD Farnford ſtaid with Conſtance till his deputy came, and then giving orders that ſhe ſhould not be left alone, he withdrew. She was ſitting with her head on her hand, ſcarcely ſenſible of what had paſſed, till her attendant, in a tone of much concern, ſaid, What is the matter, my dear young lady? I am ſo glad to ſee you; I have been longing to come in, and did not dare before I was ſent for. Do you not remember me?

The apparent ſolicitude and tenderneſs of her inquiry, the latter queſtion, and a confuſed recollection of her voice, made Conſtance look up, when ſhe ſaw that this was the young woman who had waited on her at Mrs. Stavenell's. Her joy at meeting with one ſhe knew, and who had always manifeſted a degree of more than ordinary attachment to her, was for a moment great; but the ſucceeding idea, that none in that houſe could be her friend, ſince they were all under Lord Farnford's influence, ſunk her again into deſpair. Expecting

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to have her queries anſwered by exhortations to ſubmiſſion, or panegyricks on his Lordſhip, ſhe aſked Kitty how ſhe could have been prevailed on to accept a place in ſuch a family, and what could induce her to aſſiſt in puniſhing her.—Puniſh you, Ma'm! repeated Kitty; how can you think me ſo wicked? I am ſure I'm very happy in coming to wait on you again, and I'll do all in my power to ſerve you. How can you think I am to puniſh you? Another queſtion ſatisfied Miſs Fitzarthur, that her maid was ignorant of her ſituation; ſhe learnt, that ſhe had not been an hour at Lord Farnford's that ſhe came from Mrs. Stavenell's, ſhe having ſecured the place for her, and that all that Kitty knew was, that her former miſtreſs was to be married that evening to his Lordſhip; an event ſhe heartily rejoiced in, becauſe it gratified her wiſhes to live with her.

Conſtance aſtoniſhed her by telling her how entirely this was againſt her inclination, and that nothing ſhould prevail on her, even deſtitute as ſhe was in the means to eſcape him, to marry Lord Farnford; ſhe informed her of her engagement to Lord Calorne, and was extremely comforted by ſeeing ſhe ſympathized in her diſtreſs, and by her promiſing to do whatever ſhe would direct to relieve it. The moſt effectual and expeditious method to be purſued Conſtance thought was ſending to him, who ſhe knew would at all riſques releaſe her, and ſhe engaged her maid to attempt

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the conveyance of a note. The time which ſhe had been allowed for deliberation was more than ſufficient for the purpoſe of writing it, and ſhe hoped, if ſhe could get it ready, that when Lord Farnford's return diſcharged Kitty from her attendance, ſhe might be able to forward it immediately; but ſhe needed a ſecretary, for it was impoſſible for her to guide a pen in a ſtate of ſuch perturbation; yet unwilling to employ any other hand, ſhe deſired to have a little hartſhorn and water, and flattered herſelf ſhe ſhould afterwards be more compoſed. Kitty without the leaſt heſitation, diſobeyed Lord Farnford's orders, and undertook to bring into the room with her what was neceſſary for her writing; his vigilance was awakened by the opening of the door, he met the ambaſſadreſs and queſtioned her on her errand; on her replying that ſhe was going for a glaſs of water he bid her go back, and ſent it by one of the footmen; ſhe returned to Miſs Fitzarthur, vexed at the interruption, yet encouraged her by ſaying that, if ſhe would go up ſtairs, ſhe would, as ſoon as the family were gone to bed, bring her pen, ink, and paper, and carry the note early in the morning.

To remain in Lord Farnford's cuſtody all night, was a dreadful neceſſity; but, as it was eleven o'elock, there was no remedy, and Conſtance endeavoured to animate her fortitude by recollecting the probability of her yet defeating this

ſcheme

ſcheme of his Lordſhip's, as nothing, except his preventing Kitty's getting out of the houſe, was reaſonably to be feared; for, if ſhe could not ſucceed in her intention of writing, her maid knew enough to alarm Lord Calorne, and could, without farther inſtructions, inform him of her ſituation:

She was now obliged to turn her thoughts towards the reception ſhe ſhould give the object of her averſion and horror, when her hour was expired, and ſaw nothing could be done without her pretending to conſent to the leaſt violent of his two propoſitions, as it was the only means of gaining time: to diſſemble was difficult, but here, unleſs ſhe would counteract her deſign, it was indiſpenſably neceſſary; ſhe therefore determined to endeavour appearing convinced of her inability to withſtand him, and by then her reſpite was elapſed, ſhe fancied herſelf pretty well able to face him.

He came into the room preciſely at the end of the hour, and with him returned all the terror his preſence could inſpire: ſhe dreaded the taſk ſhe had choſen, and her heart revolted at the idea of aſſuming even the reſemblance of complacency; he diſmiſſed her maid, and then, in a tone and manner calculated to remind his priſoner that her having an adoption allowed her was a favour, aſked her what ſhe had reſolved on.——The repugnance of feigning compliance

pliance with his wiſhes to her nature prompted her to make one effort towards her enlargement before ſhe told him ſhe yielded, and ſhe anſwered his queſtion by requeſting to be heard patiently; he replied that he was all attention, and ſhe ſaid;—It is but juſtice, though you have ill deſerved it from me, to warn you of the danger that awaits your keeping me here: know Lord Farnford, and at your peril detain me, that my hand it not mine to diſpoſe of, for there is one in the world who may demand of me the reſtitution of his wife.——His Lordſhip ſtarted, and changed colour, while Conſtance roſe from her ſeat, and walked from him, leſt her countenance ſhould betray that her ſecurity was not ſo complete as ſhe wiſhed him to believe. He came up to her, and laying hold of her hands, while he ſtedfaſtly looked in her face, he ſaid;—You will not ſurely aſſert that you are already married?—I am certain you are not;—this is an artifice, and you are playing the ſame game you teazed me with laſt ſummer;—I underſtand you better than I did then, and am ſure the only impediment to my ſucceſs is your obſtinacy: who is this one in the world who has ſuch a claim on you?——name him, if your ingenuity has yet enabled you.——It requires very little ingenuity, replied Conſtance, gathering courage, to ſtate a ſimple fact;—you can be at no loſs to gueſs who it is;—it is one whoſe juſt reſentment you have every reaſon to dread,—it is one you inſult in uſing me ill:—you cannot but know

know it is Lord Calorne.———O, my hectoring correſpondent, ſaid Lord Farnford—I beg your pardon; I might indeed have gueſſed who it was; but you will not undertake ſuch an enterprize as making me believe you are his wife; he will undoubtedly marry Miſs Ecklow;—her father told me ſo himſelf no longer ago than the day before yeſterday.———It is impoſſible that he ſhould, ſhe replied,——How impoſſible? rejoined his Lordſhip,—what aſſurance have you that he will not. ——Every aſſurance that is neceſſary to render me perfectly ſatisfied, ſaid Conſtance;—I have his honour to rely on, and that is an aſſurance that can never fail.

She was ſo little verſed in the arts of deceit that ſhe did not perceive Lord Farnford had, by throwing her off her guard, drawn from her the confeſſion he wanted, and which it was her higheſt intereſt to have withheld.——He replied contemptuouſly,—You have no very exalted opinion, Madam, of my ſagacity, if you hoped to impoſe on me by this pretty artifice;——you are not married to Lord Calorne, nor will you ever be, if all your dependance is on his honour; he will not be half ſo angry with me as you are for perſiſting; but I thought Miſs Fitzarthur ſcorned accepting falſity for a ſubterfuge.——Vexed at the ill ſucceſs of her project; and angry at her being ſuſpected, even by Lord Farnford,

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of departing from the truth, ſhe vehemently cleared herſelf from the imputation, and ſaid ſhe, was juſtified by ſaying Lord Calorne might claim her as a wife, from the moment they had mutually agreed to the marriage; that ſhe had aſſerted no more than was in her opinion true, and that the worſt ſhe could be charged with was having ſo ſtated it as that it admitted of two interpretations.——His Lordſhip now ſeeing he had gone too far, tried to pacify her; he begged her pardon for his too haſty expreſſion, and promiſed to offend no more.

After ſome time, which he allowed her to grow calm, he ventured to aſk the reſult of her deliberation; but ſhe had almoſt forgotten what ſhe had reſolved on, and continued ſilent; he repeated his queſtion and the terms he had offered her, deſiring her to ſpare him the diſagreeable taſk of chuſing for her; he grew urgent, and ſoon ſo peremptory that ſhe could no longer defer putting an end to his ſolicitation:—ſhe ſtrove to collect herſelf; but remembering that ſhe was about to conſent to an act which in her heart ſhe abhorred, her voice failed her, and the tears burſt from her eyes.

His fury was not another moment to be kept within bounds, he immediatly quitted her and bounced out of the room. in a few minutes he returned, his countenance lighted up with rage and

and, coming towards her, he obliged her to ſit down, drew his chair cloſe to her's, and holding her hands, ſaid with the moſt menacing air, —Is it for this that I have exerciſed ſo much lenity?—that I have given you time for deliberation? and waited your pleaſure?—fooliſh ungrateful girl! you have now made violence your choice; you have trifled with my kindneſs, and I am ſure you deſpiſe my power; but you ſhall no longer abuſe my patience, for by Heaven, neither your prayers nor tears ſhall weigh with me:——ſpeak, for this is the laſt time I ſhall aſk you;—will you conſent peaceably, or will you drive me to what I will moſt certainly practice rather than be diſappointed.—She had now no time for heſitation, but, though her fears made her wiſh to reply, they ſo far overcame her that ſhe could only ſay,—Give me till to-morrow.—You conſent then, ſaid he:—am I not to underſtand you ſo?——ſhe ſhook her head and was ſtill ſilent.——This is too much, cried his Lordſhip, again retreating from her:—I am not to be thus trifled with.——When I ſee you next, Madam, I ſhall bring Metward with me.——Your behaviour is too provoking to require my conſulting your eaſe.

Terrified almoſt to death, ſhe anſwered,—Hear me with patience, Lord Farnford:—promiſe me that I ſhall remain unmoleſted till to-

morrow evening, and———here ſhe pauſed. —And what then? ſaid he,—you will get out at the window to-morrow morning.—No, ſhe replied, I will conſent, unleſs Lord Calorne comes here and demands me.—Of that, he rejoined, I have not much to fear.—I do not know how to give you ſo long as till the evening to-morrow, becauſe I am then particularly engaged, yet I would do any thing rather than diſoblige you;—are you ſure you have no intention of deceiving me?——I mean, ſaid Conſtance, exactly what I propoſe.—Then, anſwered he, I will wait, however inconvenient it may be, and I promiſe you, and will ſwear it, if you aſk it, that nothing except your breaking your word, ſhall induce me to any precipitation; —but Miſs Fitzarthur muſt forgive me if I beg her to repeat her promiſe;—does ſhe mean, on condition that ſhe remain, unſolicited till to-morrow evening, freely and willingly then to become my wife?—Freely and willingly it can never be, ſhe anſwered:—I promiſe to ſubmit, unleſs Lord Calorne comes and demands me.—And you will ſuffer the ceremony to be performed without any hindrance from you?—Certainly, provided it is done with the proper and uſual formalities.—And this you agree to?——I do.—Then on my part, ſaid he, I promiſe that no violence or entreaty ſhall be uſed towards you till then, that

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the ſolmnity ſhall be performed with propriety, that all the reſpect due to a counteſs ſhall be ſhewn you, and that the chief, nay the ſole ſtudy of my life ſhall be to promote your happineſs.——What is the earlieſt hour to-morrow evening you chuſe to name?—Eight o'clock is the lateſt I can give you.—On this the otherwiſe diſcordant pair agreed, and, ſoon after, ſupper was announced, Lord Farnford preſſed her to go with him, but, as ſhe refuſed and pleaded fatigue, he gave her her choice either to remain where ſhe was, or to retire to her chamber; ſhe accepted the latter; her maid was called, at parting he wiſhed her good night, deſired ſhe ſhould make herſelf perfectly eaſy, for that her ſervant ſhould ſit up with her, and ſaid ſhe might rely on his honour that nothing ſhould annoy her.

CHAP. XXV.

TEMPORIZING.

IN a ſtate of trepidation that almoſt diſlocated her joints, as ſoon as ſhe had reached her chamber, and her maid had produced what was needful for the purpoſe, ſhe wrote as follows to Lord Calorne:

'My Lord, Thurſday, Midnight.

'I am again in Lord Farnford's 'power; he detains me at his houſe in Portman-'ſquare, and inſiſts on my conſenting to marry 'him.——The meſſage yeſterday from Mrs. 'Gaynham was a forgery of his.—I am only 'allowed till eight o'clock to-morrow, when 'you know, this, may I beg you to come to 'me as ſoon as poſſible?——Till eight o'clock I

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'am however ſafe; but my anxiety and terror 'almoſt deprive me of my ſenſes.

'Pray let Lady Harriet know where I am; '—ſhe muſt imagine I have deceived you, or 'elſe I am ſure ſhe is very unhappy for 'me.

'The hope of ſeeing you very ſoon after 'you receive this, will enable me to bear my 'impriſonment till you come. I am wholly in-'capable of judging whether what I have writ-'ten is intelligible, and when I think of you, I 'feel ſo much for you, that I could kill my-'ſelf for the miſery I have made you undergo. '—I am ſo unfortunate that I am not worth 'your ſaving, from any other motive than com-'paſſion.

'Do not, I beſeech you, be alarmed; his 'behaviour to me is more reſpectful than I could have hoped, though he is obſtinate to the laſt 'degree.—In whatever means you propoſe for 'my deliverance, as you love me think of 'your own ſafety, for he will be outrageous 'when he finds I have eſcaped his vigilance;— 'Do nothing raſhly; it will be better for me to 'remain an hour or two longer here, than that 'you ſhould fail in your attempt. I ſhall not 'be unhappy, when I know this has reached 'you, nor at all impatient. Remember eight 'o'clock is the laſt hour I am allowed; but

'I rely on you, and truſt that, as it has pleaſed 'God to afford me a means of acquainting 'you with my danger, it reſts with you to de-'termine whether I ſhall be Lord Farnford's, or, 'as indeed I am,

'Your

'C. M. FITZARTHUR.'

Her mind was conſiderably relieved by having thus far executed her project, and though her agitation was great, hope predominated, ſince, unleſs her maid's concern for her was pretended, hardly any probable accident could diſappoint her. Yet, notwithſtanding ſhe was morally aſſured of her deliverance, ſhe could not think of reſt, and Kitty's promiſe that, if ſhe would lie down, ſhe would not quit her, could not overcome her apprehenſions.

Day light ſoon appeared, and never was it received with a more truly heart-felt welcome: ſhe gave her letter to Kitty, and ſent her down ſtairs to reconnoitre, though not with much expectation of her being yet able to get out, and it was well ſhe had not flattered herſelf, for Lord Farnford was ſtill up. On inquiring what her maid had ſeen or heard, ſhe was told that the ſervants were many of them about the houſe, and that by making a frivolous pretext of being ſent for ſome water, ſhe had learnt it was not his Lordſhip's intention to go to bed, but to keep guard himſelf.

At

At eight o'clock ſhe ſent her meſſenger down again, with no better ſucceſs; Lord Farnford had met her, inquired after her Miſtreſs, diſcovering no apprehenſions for her ſafety, and ſhe preſently returned to Conſtance, who began to fear her guardian would prove too vigilant for her, till Kitty ſaid ſhe thought ſhe might eaſily eſcape if they waited an hour or two, as his Lordſhip might then be at breakfaſt, and the ſervants would be engaged in their various occupations. To this torturing delay ſhe was forced to ſubmit, and ſoon after received a meſſage from Lord Farnford, deſiring to know whether ſhe would come down ſtairs or have her breakfaſt ſent to her, and at what time ſhe would chuſe it; after a little heſitation ſhe ſaid ſhe would come down immediately. Her hope now roſe, for, by going to Lord Farnford, ſhe was ſure of detaining him, and Kitty would be for a time diſmiſſed, ſo that ſhe might without ſuſpicion remain in the lower part of the houſe till ſhe ſaw a convenient opportunity of ſetting off.—Her Miſtreſs repeated her injunctions to her to ſee Lord Calorne, if poſſible, himſelf, and to learn what he would do, and then, with benedictions, and wiſhes for the proſperity of her undertaking, left her for her unwelcome dejeuné.

It was now proper to diſguiſe her ſentiments in order to avoid irritating Lord Farnford; but

to behave even with civility to a man whom ſhe had ſuch reaſon to dread and deteſt, was a very difficult taſk. He met her in that which had been Lady Maria's dreſſing-room, and with much ſolicitude inquired after her health, adding,—If I may judge by appearances we needed not to have parted, for I do not think either of us has ſlept. He ſeemed highly pleaſed with finding her leſs iraſcible than when ſhe quitted him the night before, and acknowledged her kindneſs in coming down to him. All her hopes were ſcarcely powerful enough to ſupport her when, the attendants having retired, Lord Farnford ſaid he wiſhed to have her approbation of the method he had propoſed for the buſineſs of eight in the evening; he had, ſome weeks before, invited a large company to a farewell entertainment on their leaving town for the ſummer, and his two engagements muſt be kept clear of each other: he told her that, if ſhe had no objection, the ſervice ſhould be read in the room where ſhe was, and that on her promiſe that ſhe would occaſion no interruption, a ſufficient number of witneſſes ſhould be preſent; that ſhe muſt ſee the neceſſity of punctuality, but, that if there was any thing in what he propoſed to which ſhe could reaſonably object, provided his compliance was not incompatible with his ſucceſs, he would very willingly indulge her.

She

She was not at all inclined to enter into a diſpute with him; and truſting that ſhe was totally unintereſted in his ſcheme, declared herſelf ſatisfied: he ſeemed equally rejoiced and ſurprized at her placability, and thanking her for it, ſaid, Your diſpoſition to oblige me, deſerves a better reward than being again called on for freſh favours; yet there is one particular which though trivial in itſelf, would complete your condeſcenſion.——Conſtance now feared ſuch an infringement of his promiſe, as he had, while ſhe was his priſoner in the country, been guilty of; but he ſoon relieved her diſtreſs by aſſuring her, that what he was about to aſk, was what he could not doubt her very readily granting.—All I wiſh, ſaid he, is, that you would gratify me by changing your dreſs before eight o'clock.———She ſtarted at the requeſt, and aſked how he could think it poſſible, as ſhe had no cloaths with her.———I will put you in a way to do it, he replied, if you will follow it; I underſtand you were to have been married in a few days, and I will anſwer for it, that you would not then have worn mourning; your cloaths are, I dare ſay, at Mr. Gaynham's, and if you will conſent to quit this diſmal garb, I will ſend a meſſage to Lady Harriet, deſiring that ſuch things as you ſhall enable me to deſcribe, may be returned by my ſervant: indulge me in this if you can, for I ſhould be ſorry to have you dreſt in deep mourning for your wedding: beſide that, it would have an odd ap-

pearance.——Conſtance could not refrain from ſaying that her external habit correſponded beſt with the ſituation ſhe was in, but his Lordſhip ſeemed to expect ſuch a reply, and anſwered it only by repeating his requeſt.

Though ſhe thought complying with this unimportant wiſh abſurd, ſhe ſaw that it was poſſible to make it uſeful to her, as a meſſage ſent to Lady Harriet could not fail to alarm the family; and in caſe Kitty met with any obſtacle, this might ſerve the purpoſe for which ſhe had employed her. She wondered Lord Farnford's ſagacity had ſo deſerted him, as that he did not ſee he was marring his deſign, and, feaful that it ſhould return to him, ſhe replied, that, if he deſired it, ſhe would write a note to Lady Harriet inſtantly.———No, ſaid he, I will not trouble you. Tell me what you would have, and I will be your amanuenſis.———She would have preferred writing herſelf, but as ſhe could not hope he would ſuffer her note to paſs without examination, the difference was immaterial, and ſhe tried to recollect what ſhe had beſt ſend for. Her ſpirits were ſo hurried, and her memory ſo impaired by the terror ſhe had been in, that ſhe could not name any thing, excepting the gown ſhe was to wear on Saturday morning: with this, to her ſurprize, Lord Farnford was contented; and as one article, were it ever ſo trifling, was ſufficient to inform Lady Harriet, ſhe forbore obſerving, that this alone would dreſs her in a very motly ſtyle, and

that

that ſhe muſt be partially in deep mourning. His Lordſhip wrote on the back of a letter, in pencil, what ſhe had named, and was to appearance, as perfectly ſatisfied as if ſhe had ſent for all her cloaths. She congratulated herſelf on his aſtoniſhing privation of foreſight, and hoped ſhe had an additional ſecurity from accident or diſappointment of any kind.

The ſubject was dropped, and Conſtance would gladly have retired; but it was her policy to prevent any inquiry for her maid, and this was no way to be done but by her remaining with Lord Farnford. She could only gueſs when Kitty returned, and thought if ſhe allowed her an hour, as ſhe had bid her take a coach, ſhe might ſafely riſque calling for her. Not more than half that time was now expired, and his Lordſhip, who could not flatter himſelf with the expectation of ſo long a téte-á-téte, improved the opportunity of exerciſing his rhetoric, by promiſing wonders of reformation, and by endeavouring to perſuade her that Lord Calorne meant to deceive her.

CHAP. XXVI.

NEWS.

SHE was juſt determined, rather to hazard Kitty's being not yet returned, than to remain in this ſtate of purgatory, when the door opened, and ſhe for whom ſhe was wiſhing came to her with her ſmelling-bottle; this errand Conſtance underſtood to be only a ſignal that ſhe was come back; and having aſked Lord Farnford's permiſſion to retire, ſhe went with her up ſtairs: as ſoon as they were free from the danger of being over-heard, ſhe received the joyful news, that her maid had gone out and returned, by the way through the offices, unobſerved, and that ſhe had carried the letter to St. James's Place; but Conſtance's pleaſure was a little abated by hearing, that Lord Calorne was at the time from home; yet, as a ſtrict charge was left to give it to him immediately on his return, ſhe hoped, that though his unfortunate abſence might delay her releaſe, it was not the leſs certain.

Enlivened by the expectation of being ſoon freed from the danger that ſurrounded her, and by the proſpect of being in a very ſhort time in a ſituation in which at leaſt ſhe had not Lord Farnford to fear, ſhe turned her thoughts towards rewarding and ſecuring

ſecuring Kitty. She therefore adviſed her, that as ſoon as Lord Calorne came, to go to Burlington-ſtreet, whither ſhe would on her enlargement follow her; but ſhe found it difficult to prevail on Kitty to leave her: Miſs Fitzarthur however urged it, and convincing her that Lord Calorne would not quit the houſe without her, ſhe promiſed to carry Lady Harriet the news of her miſtreſs's deliverance.

Conſtance now wiſhed to put herſelf as much as poſſible in Lord Calorne's way, which ſhe could not ſo effectually do as by being with Lord Farnford, yet this was ſo diſagreeable to her that ſhe made her anxiety yield, and reſolved to ſtay where ſhe was. Though her perturbation increaſed every moment, and the leaſt noiſe awakened her attention, as ſhe had little to fear and every thing to hope from her champion's courage and conduct, ſhe was not unhappy; anticipating what ſhe waited for, ſhe began to doubt her being able to bear the exceſſive joy of ſeeing Lord Calorne, as ſhe could not expect to know of his arrival till he came to her; ſhe dreaded whatever might, even for the ſhorteſt time, detain her, and therefore endeavoured to prepare herſelf for his ſudden entrance, often ſending Kitty to hearken on the ſtairs, if ſhe heard a door ſhut or a ſtrange voice.

Near two hours were thus ſpent, and Conſtance's hopes were wound up to as great a height as well-founded expectation which a few minutes might convert

convert into a certainty could raiſe them. While ſhe was indulging in the delightful idea of being ſoon reſcued from her impriſonment, and from an importunity yet leſs tolerable, a meſſage was brought to her from Lord Farnford, deſiring to ſpeak with her. 'Surely,' replied Conſtance, when Kitty had delivered this requeſt, 'Lord Calorne is come 'and I ſhall be peaceably given up; I thank God 'for it; but aſk if Lord Farnford has any body 'with him, for perhaps I ſhall be too much ſur-'prized.' Her pleaſing apprehenſion was removed by hearing that her guardian was alone; and, though ſomewhat diſappointed, ſhe obeyed his ſummons, unable to gueſs at his buſineſs, yet flattering herſelf ſhe had nothing to fear.

When the ſervant who waited opened the door of the room where his lordſhip was, he advanced to meet her, and leading her to a chair, he apologized for his ſending for her, inſtead of coming to her. From his preface, which was delivered in a ſtyle the moſt ceremonious, Conſtance could gather nothing; ſhe therefore deſired to know his Lord-ſhip's buſineſs with her. "My dear Miſs Fitz-"arthur," he anſwered, "I am certain you con-"ſider me at this moment as a man governed by "his paſſions, obſtinate, incapable of reaſoning, "and bent only on ſelf-gratification, without re-"garding the eaſe and happineſs of others; but I "will now convince you, that in your ideas of me "you are miſtaken; I will convince you, that your "happineſs, abſtracted from my own, is the object

"I aim

" I aim at; and when you are ſatisfied of this truth
" you will not, I hope, ſcruple to believe my profeſ-
" ons of love for you ſuch as you would wiſh them
" and that I would forego any advantage rather
" than you ſhould ſubmit to injury."

She now almoſt repented what ſhe had ſaid of Lord Farnford in her letter to Lord Calorne; ſhe believed, though his conviction had arrived late, that he ſaw the hopeleſſneſs, the madneſs, and the criminality of his deſign, and was ſorry ſhe had ſo nearly wreſted from him the merit of generouſly reſtoring her; he now appeared to her another being, and ſhe could hardly reſtrain her expreſſions of gratitude while he proceeded. " I ſee," continued he, " you believe me; but hear me with
" patience; you have been cruelly treated, you
" have been impoſed upon, and advantage has
" been taken of your unſuſpecting temper; the
" man who has deceived you ſhall be puniſhed as
" he deſerves, and you ſhall this day be ſecured
" from his artifices; he ſhall ſuffer for his duplicity,
" by ſeeing you placed out of the reach even of
" his wiſhes, and you ſhall no more be expoſed to
" inſult or impoſition; henceforward you ſhall re-
" gard me as your protector, your deliverer from
" an evil, that, had it fallen on you, would have
" cruſhed you to atoms; and, if your ſenſe of the
" afront is too great to allow of your forgiving it,
" my ſword ſhall revenge it."

Nearly

Nearly overcome with joy and gratitude, ſhe anſwered not a word, but burſt into tears: "You "lament his baſeneſs," reſumed Lord Farnford, "but you muſt not honour him with your tears; "he is a wretch undeſerving of your pity; conſider "what he has done, and rouſe your indignation "againſt him." 'The injuries I have borne,' replied ſhe, in a ſcarcely audible voice, 'are cer-'tainly great; but in the atonement offered all 'ſenſe of them is forgotten.' "What atonement?" interrupted his lordſhip, "he has put it out of his "power to make you any reparation." 'No ſure-'ly,' replied Conſtance, 'you may yet reſtore me 'to my friends, and by that act of generoſity inſure 'my forgiveneſs of all that is paſt.' "And how "ſhouldI then," ſaid he, "diſcharge my promiſe of "protecting you? It would eventually be betray-"ing you, to give you up to thoſe whom you ſtyle "your friends; they have, ſo far as their power ex-"tended, rendered you an object of contempt; "and I doubt not will exert themſelves ſtill further "to involve you in my ruin and infamy." 'My 'lord,' interrupted Conſtance, amazed and alarm-ed, 'I do not underſtand you: the friends I mean 'are ſuch'——"My dear madam," interrupted his lordſhip, "have patience for a moment, and I "will convince you what thoſe friends are; and "you will, when you know them properly, own, "that I, whom you now think the deſtroyer of "your peace, am the preſerver of it: you ſhall

"own,

" own, that I have ſhielded you from the greateſt " misfortune that could have befallen you; and that " I have ſpared you a conflict in which the victory " of reaſon over love muſt have coſt you many " pangs; but I ſee you do not comprehend my " meaning; truſt then the evidence of your ſight, " for perhaps you will ſtill doubt that of your " hearing." Saying theſe words, he reached from a table a newſpaper, which he put into her hand, pointing out to her obſervation the following paragraph.

" Yeſterday evening was married, by a ſpecial licence, at St. ———'s ——— ———, Lord Viſcount Calorne, only ſon of the Earl of Ormington, to Miſs Ecklow, of Upper Harley-ſtreet."

The diſappointment and mortification which Conſtance felt, in diſcovering that ſhe had miſunderſtood Lord Farnford were inconceivably great; but this intelligence, which ſhe conſidered as the laſt effort of impoſition, excited her contempt more than her anger; ſhe laid the paper again on the table, and ſaid, 'Could your lordſhip conſider me 'ſo totally ignorant of the world as not to know 'that ſuch inſertions as theſe are frequently without 'foundation, and that any intereſted perſon may 'propagate a report by ſuch means?' " You " ſuſpect then," he replied, " that I am the author " of this paragraph." 'Not poſitively that *you* 'are,' ſhe anſwered, 'but it is ſome perſon intereſt-

'ed

'ed in what they have aſſerted; however, it mat-
'ters little whence the falſehood ſprings; it will
'not impoſe on me.' "But it is of importance to
"me," returned Lord Farnford, warmly, "to
"prove, or endeavour by every means in my pow-
"er to prove, that your ſuſpicions of me are
"groundleſs; for may I never again be believed
"if I inſerted, cauſed to be inſerted, or knew of
"the inſertion of this article." 'You may ſpare
'your proteſtations,' ſaid Conſtance, 'it is ſcarcely
'worth denying—it can do no miſchief.' "You
"will not then believe me?" he replied. 'I will
'believe,' anſwered ſhe, 'all you have directly
'aſſerted; but yet the article may have been put
'in by ſome one who knows you wiſhed me to be-
'lieve it.' "That I think hardly probable," ſaid
his lordſhip, "of this I can aſſure you, that I read
"it with as much ſurprize as you could have felt;
"not becauſe I thought it was a falſehood, but
"becauſe I imagined Calorne would have kept it
"out of the papers, and in not doing ſo, I cannot
"admire his prudence." 'I dare ſay,' replied
Conſtance, 'Lord Calorne is as little concerned
'about it as I am; he will not be uneaſy at my
'ſeeing it, for for he will know I cannot believe it;
'and to convince you,' ſhe continued, 'of the
'impoſſibility of impoſing on me to his prejudice,
'I will tell you, that laſt night, in paſſing the
'church mentioned in that paragraph, I ſaw his
'carriage waiting amongſt ſeveral others; I was told

'there

'there was a wedding, and yet I was not at all 'jealous; nor will any thing make me ſuſpect one 'who has behaved ſo honourably and ſo affectionate-'ly to me, when it was his intereſt to have deſerted 'me.'

"Well," cried the earl, "you are bleſſed with "an ample portion of incredulity, yet I think it "would not be amiſs to inquire into the report, for "finding that it is true will be the only way of "perſuading you that it did not originate with me. "I am well aware that newſpaper information is "not authority, yet I do believe that in this in-"ſtance it may be relied upon, and your ſeeing his "carriage is a ſtrong ſupport of my opinion." 'He might be at the church,' ſaid Conſtance, 'though not for the purpoſe of marrying Miſs 'Ecklow, for that I am confident is impoſſible.' "Do not be ſo poſitive," returned Lord Farnford, "did he ever mention to you that he was to be at "that church yeſterday evening?—Did he ſay he "was to be preſent at the marriage of any friend "or relation? If he did, that will account for "his being there; if he did not, you muſt not "think I judge raſhly if I ſay, he could have no "motive for keeping ſuch an engagement ſecret "from you, but fear that you ſhould find out his "deceit." 'He did not ſay any thing of it, it is 'true,' anſwered Miſs Fitzarthur, 'it is probable 'he forgot it, for I ſaw him only a very ſhort time 'in the morning.' "It is not *impoſſible*," ſaid his lordſhip,

lordſhip, " if he did not mention any engagement " for the remainder of the day; but recollect " whether you heard him ſay he had buſineſs in " the evening, or was obliged to be preſent at any " meeting; for if he could remember ſo much, I " cannot believe he forgot it unintentionally."— ' I remember,' replied Conſtance, ' that when he ' was going I aſked him if we ſhould ſee him at ' dinner, and he ſaid—no, for that he had an in- ' vitation which he could not refuſe; and when I ' ſaw Mr. Gaynham, he told me it was at Mr. ' Ecklow's that he was to dine, and yet I am uncon- ' vinced.' " Why what proof would you have?" ſaid Lord Farnford, " you cannot maintain your " opinion, that he forgot where he was engaged; " unleſs you ſuppoſe him to be ſo much in love as " to have loſt his wits." ' Might he not,' rejoined ſhe, ' have a thouſand reaſons for not informing ' me of it?—what right have I to be made ac- ' quainted with the manner in which his time is ' ſpent?—it is hard indeed if he is to account to ' me for every hour of the day: if he is ſatisfied ' that his time is properly employed, it is ſufficient, ' I ſhall never interfere in his engagements.'

" You have," replied his lordſhip, " an inflex- " ible good opinion of Calorne; yet, unleſs I am " more impoſed on than ever credulity was, you " are deceived in him: can you think him ſo much " above mortality as to be impeccable?—does he " never conſult ſelf-intereſt, and endeavour to make

" circum-

" circumſtances conform to his wiſhes? Beſide,
" how do you know what threats his father might
" uſe? His duty and his intereſt led one way,
" and do you think his *notions of honour* would re-
" ſtrain him from complying with Lord Ormington's
" commands? How can you be reſponſible for his
" actions, or for thoſe of any one?" 'For *his*
'actions,' replied Conſtance, 'I can ſafely become
'reſponſible, and would anſwer for his integrity
'with my life: Lord Calorne is truly a nobleman:
'he has given up all that ſome would call valuable
'for my ſake, and no perſuaſions you can uſe, no
'proof you can adduce, ſhall make me for a
'moment think ill of him.' " Well," rejoined
Lord Farnford, " I will put you to the teſt: you ſay
" you would anſwer for his honour with your life;
" will you allow he has forfeited it if he has married
" Miſs Ecklow?" 'Certainly,' ſaid ſhe, 'and his
'ſenſes too.' " Then will you," ſaid his lordſhip,
" ſuppoſing I clearly and incontrovertibly prove to
" you that he has married her, conſent freely and
" voluntarily to accept me in his ſtead?" 'Will
'you,' returned Conſtance, 'provided you fail to
'prove it, promiſe immediately to ſet me at liberty
'and reſtore me, in the ſtate I am in, to my friends?'
" That requires deliberation," he anſwered;
" not that I doubt being able to prove what I have
" advanced, but, as I cannot tell what ſort of proof
" would be ſufficient to ſatisfy your incredulity,
" you will always have it in your power to declare
" yourſelf

" yourſelf unconvinced, and to inſiſt on my giving " you up; what teſtimonials are neceſſary to your " believing it?" 'Such,' ſaid ſhe, 'as a reaſon-'able diſintereſted perſon would think ſufficient— 'a copy of the regiſter, ſigned by the clergyman 'who performed the ceremony, if it were not Mr. 'Metward, would convince me.' " I take your " offer then," replied Lord Farnford, " you ſhall " depart as you are, if I do not make good what " I have aſſerted; but then you muſt on your part " conſent to my propoſal." 'I am thoroughly 'convinced,' ſaid Conſtance, 'that you have 'undertaken more than you can perform, that I 'might ſafely promiſe; yet I cannot think myſelf 'juſtified in putting ſuch a matter on any riſque.' " Then I retract," interrupted he. 'No, rather,' replied ſhe, 'I will venture to bind myſelf:—I 'agree to what you offer.' " Then I wiſh you " joy, madam, for you are mine," cried his lord-ſhip, " the Right Honourable Counteſs of Farn-" ford ſhall have the ſatisfaction ſhe aſks; I am " ſure I can procure it for her, or ſhe may procure " it for herſelf, if ſhe ſuſpects me of any trick." 'You are, replied Miſs Fitzarthur, 'moſt egregi-'ouſly duped, if you really think you can produce it.' " I will at leaſt try," ſaid he, " but if you pleaſe " you ſhall write a note to the miniſter yourſelf, and " and ſend it by any one of the ſervants, leſt I may " impoſe on you; or, if you do not chuſe to truſt " my people, let a porter be ſent for." She ſaid

ſhe

ſhe ſhould be ſatisfied with hearing the meſſage he ſent, and he wrote a note to Dr. ———, which he ſhewed to her, deſiring to know if Lord Calorne was or was not married the preceding evening to Miſs Ecklow? He then rang for one of the footmen, to whom, in Conſtance's ſight, he gave the commiſſion. The openneſs of his conduct on this occaſion took away all fear of impoſition, and ſhe did not doubt but the anſwer would intitle her to her enlargement.

CHAP. XXVII.

CONFIDENCE.

AS there was nothing now to detain her below, and ſome time muſt elapſe before the meſſenger returned, ſhe choſe to retire to her apartment, and was going, when Lord Farnford recollected ſomething which he had forgotten to tell her; and this was, that he had ſent to Lady Harriet for her clothes. She was obliged to conceal the joy this information occaſioned her, leſt he ſhould diſcover her hopes and countermand his orders; and with

more

more ſanguine expectations than ever of being ſoon freed, either by Lord Farnford's performance of the compact between them, by Lord Calorne's coming, or by whatever method Lady Harriet might purſue when ſhe was alarmed by the meſſage; ſhe communicated to her maid the increaſe of her hope.

Yet, notwithſtanding her deliverance now appeared within reach, her ſpirits were much agitated and oppreſſed; and when ſhe conſidered, that ſhould Lord Calorne arrive before the anſwer to the meſſage juſt ſent to the clergyman, his life might be in danger from Lord Farnford's fury, ſhe was almoſt ſorry, ſince ſhe had obtained a conditional promiſe, as good in her opinion as if it had been abſolute, that ſhe had expoſed her defender either to his rage or his inſult. She now grew exceſſively anxious, for it was within a few minutes of one o'clock, and ſhe ſuppoſed that by this time Lord Calorne muſt have been at home, as he was always regular and punctual. Kitty tried to calm her, by reminding her that it muſt be buſineſs that had called him out ſo early, and it might detain him; her miſtreſs concurred in the ſuppoſition, and thought herſelf ſecure, becauſe ſhe knew he had engaged company to dine with him at his houſe; and, as ſhe had nothing to dread at worſt till eight o'clock, ſhe was not deaf to reaſon, but turned her thoughts towards the pleaſing ſide of her proſpect, cheared by conſidering that the next day would remove all her fears.

In

In a ſhort time ſhe heard ſomebody coming up ſtairs, and ſending Kitty before her, ſhe went out to the door to look who it was, when ſhe was met by a man-ſervant with a large caravan in his hand, which he ſaid was for her, and gave her the key. It was carried into the room, and ſhe immediately opened it, imagining that it came from Mr. Gaynham's, and yet condemning this conjecture as abſurd; but a note which lay at the top of its other contents declared it to be juſt, and to her amazement ſhe ſaw that not only her gown, but her hat, cap, and every article of her dreſs for the next morning was ſent: ſhe ſhook with fear, for which ſhe could ſcarcely aſſign a cauſe, and read theſe words in Lady Harriet's writing:———

"I hardly know, my dear, whether I had beſt "ſend only thoſe things in which you have exer- "ciſed your taſte and judgment, or all the detail "of your dreſs; but yet I think I ſhall err leſs "by ſending too much than too little, as perhaps "you may chuſe to come to us dreſt.

"I am in haſte, yet with the ſincereſt eſteem and "affection—do let me anticipate a few hours, and "ſubſcribe myſelf,

"Your very happy ſiſter,—

"H. GAYNHAM."

What artifice had been employed to deceive Lady Harriet, was not to be fathomed; but that ſhe was not, as Conſtance expected her to have been, alarmed, was evident, and ſhe ſoon found her miſtake, in imagining ſhe had over-reached Lord Farnford. A third part of her hopes, was now vaniſhed, and ſhe felt mortified at the diſappointment; yet ſatisfied that her two remaining reſources were infallible, ſhe would not indulge in a diſpoſition to lament. A gentle tap at the door again rouzed her expectations, and ſhe flew acroſs the room to receive, as ſhe thought, the welcome tidings; but ſhe was again deceived in her moſt ſanguine hope, for it was a requeſt from Lord Farnford, that ſhe would come down to have the anſwer ſent to his note. She was once more elevated by the proſpect of a deciſive victory, and ſeeing his Lordſhip confounded by his own endeavours; and, taking her cloak with her, that ſhe might not have occaſion to return to her ſcene of miſery, or be obliged to wait an unneceſſary moment, ſhe followed the ſervant down.

The anſwer returned to Lord Farnford's query was ſealed, and he had not yet opened it; he gave it to Conſtance, who read it; it was from the miniſter of the pariſh, and to this effect:—'That he was extremely ſorry he could not oblige Lord Farnford with the information he required, but that, if he would do him the honour to meet him at the veſtry, he ſhould, at any time he would appoint,

ſee

ſee the regiſter: that he was ſo far at liberty as to be allowed to declare, that Miſs Ecklow was married the preceding evening, though to whom it was the wiſh of the parties ſhould for a few days remain a ſecret.

This was not the ſatisfaction Conſtance had expected; ſhe was ſtaggered, but far from convinced that it was to Lord Calorne that Miſs Ecklow was married. Lord Farnford candidly acknowledged, that this did not amount to a proof, though it afforded him ſtill ſtronger reaſon to believe his information true. He propoſed to Conſtance their going together to ſee the regiſter, as that would at once convince her of the fact; but from the fear of miſſing Lord Calorne, ſhe declined it. On her refuſing this, which was undoubtedly a fair offer, Lord Farnford ſaid, ſhe ought either to declare herſelf convinced of what he had endeavoured to prove, or to ſuffer him to produce ſuch other evidence, as would ſupport his aſſertion; but her reaſons for not going, were too ſtrong to be diſpenſed with; and his Lordſhip, perhaps fearing that, if ſhe went againſt her will, ſhe might give him cauſe to repent his compulſion, was driven to contrive another method to perſuade her of the truth of that which it was eſſential to his ſucceſs that he ſhould believe: he therefore with her approbation, ſent to the pariſh clerk, deſiring to ſpeak with him immediately.

Fear on this ſubject now firſt entered Conſtance's heart; but it was not fear that Lord Calorne had deceived her: her apprehenſion aroſe from foreſeeing that, though what Lord Farnford was exerting himſelf to prove, was falſe, yet he might find means ſufficient to impoſe on her, and this ſuſpicion his confidence and his ſtrenuous endeavours warranted. She ſummoned all her powers of reaſon, ſagacity, and caution, to defeat his purpoſe, recollecting all the promiſes by which Lord Calorne had bound himſelf, his generoſity, his diſintereſted love for her, and the renunciation he had made to obtain her; and ſhe concluded, that it was as impoſſible that he could be guilty of any diſhonourable act, as ſhe found it difficult to believe ill of him; reſolving ſteadily, that, as nothing ought, nothing ſhould ſo far miſlead as to convince her.

Her natural averſion to Lord Farnford, and the tumultuous anxiety of her mind, made her wiſh to ſpend as little time as poſſible with him, yet, as her abſence at the opening of the ſcene between him and the man for whom he had ſent, might afford an opportunity of tampering with him, and her ſtay might defeat this, ſhe remained where ſhe was, and heard his Lordſhip reiterate his proteſtations of love for her, and his deteſtation of his rival's conduct, with an indifference only to be accounted for by the ſovereign contempt ſhe entertained for Lord Calorne's accuſer, and her eulogiſt.

The

The clerk of St. ———'s pariſh lived at no great diſtance from Portman-ſquare; he was from home, and was not expected to return in leſs than two hours; a delay which added to Conſtance's mortifications, and made her think her deliverance was reſerved for Lord Calorne's hand, who it could hardly be doubted, would be with her before the expiration of that time. The ſervant was ſent again, to deſire he might come as ſoon as he could; and, Conſtance's diſlike of her companion getting the better of other conſiderations, ſhe went up to wait her liberation where ſhe was not reſtrained from ſaying ſhe expected it.

The clock ſtruck three, and every carriage that rolled in the ſquare awakened her attention: the room ſhe was in was at the back of the houſe, and the doors of the front apartments were locked, ſo that ſhe was obliged to rely on the information of her ears; a ſucceſſion of thundering raps raiſed her hopes, but diſappointment was ever the conſequence, and ſhe became more anxious than ever.

She was not long allowed to indulge herſelf in the anticipation of the felicity in view, for Lord Farnford again called her down, and meeting her at the foot of the ſtairs, aſked her conſent to ſending to Lord Calorne's houſe for information on the point in queſtion: to this ſhe readily agreed, and the man who had lived at Mrs. Gaynham's was told to go, as of himſelf, and to learn from the ſervants, whether their Lord was not married.

Lord Farnford now, as if more confident of ſucceſs than ever, urged her to employ this interval in dreſſing for the evening, and ſaid he hoped Lady Harriet had ſent every thing ſhe could want: ſhe replied that it was of little importance, for that ſhe truſted ſhe ſhould have no occaſion to make uſe of any of the things while ſhe was in that houſe: this produced another altercation on the probability and improbability of his lordſhip's ſubſtantiating his charge, from which ſhe could get no relief till the ſervant who had been ſent to St. James's-place returned and related the particulars he had collected; he ſaid he had ſeen the butler and the houſe-keeper, who both told him Lord Calorne was certainly married, though it was kept ſecret; that he had dined the day before at Mr. Ecklow's, that his lordſhip and another gentleman went together to St. ————'s church, and that Mr. Ecklow's coach, with two ladies and a gentleman, followed: that in returning from church Lord Calorne and one of the ladies went in the chariot, and followed Mr. Ecklow's coach a little way, when the coachman was ſtopped, and ordered to drive as faſt as he could to a houſe in Piccadilly where they got out, and his Lordſhip ſent his carriage and ſervants home: he added that all his ſervants appeared in great confuſion, and wondered that Lord Calorne had not either been at home or ſent to them ſince he went out

at

at four the preceding day, as he had not told them he ſhould ſleep abroad, and he was to have ſeveral friends to dine with him, but that they expected him every minute.——And is this, ſaid Conſtance, all the reaſon Lord Calorne's ſervants had for ſuppoſing he is married?——O no, ma'am, he replied, they are ſure of it, for they have all warning, excepting one footman, and my Lord when he gave it them told them he muſt part with them becauſe he was to be married before the week was out, and moreover promiſed them a quarter's wages.—Lord Farnford looked at Miſs Fitzarthur who remained equally unmoved and unconvinced: ſhe concluded that they had miſconſtrued what they had ſeen, and tacking to it what they had heard, and which ſhe knew related to herſelf, had drawn an erroneous concluſion. The meſſenger was diſmiſſed, Lord Farnford tried to perſuade her to admit this as final evidence, and found that nothing which did not exclude the poſſibility of error would weigh againſt her ſtrong prepoſſeſſion.

CHAP. XXVIII.

DECEPTION.

SHE now ſuſpected that Lord Farnford hoped to weary her out by producing proof after proof, and therefore told him that he muſt ſet ſome bounds to his attempts, as the bringing an hundred people to repeat what ſhe had heard would not convince her, and he might detain her a long while if trifling reports were to be attended to and collected for the purpoſe of drawing inferences from them: the evidence of ſome one muſt be concluſive, and ſhe wiſhed it to be that of the man ſent for. His Lordſhip admitted the truth of her obſervation, and it was agreed that her fate ſhould be determined by what the clerk of St. ————'s ſhould ſay, provided, on the one hand, that he was preſent at the wedding, and on the other, that he appeared unbiaſſed.

This point was, much to the ſatisfaction and encouragement of her whom it ſo nearly concerned, juſt ſettled, when the arbitrator of her doom arrived. Lord Farnford offered to leave the room, that ſhe might put ſuch queſtions to the man as ſhe thought

thought proper, and be convinced that he was not either awed or tutored. She was by this candid propoſal freed from all fears reſpecting the truth of what ſhe was to hear, and ſhe deſired his Lordſhip to interrogate him.—Was there, ſaid his Lordſhip, a wedding at your church yeſterday evening? —Yes, replied the man, a ſpecial licence, the Doctor himſelf officiated.—And who were the parties married? ſaid his Lordſhip.—Lord Calorne and Miſs Ecklow, replied he.———The Earl fixed his eyes on Conſtance; ſhe changed colour, but immediately recollecting herſelf, ſhe ſaid that there muſt be ſome miſtake, for that it was impoſſible it could be ſo; Lord Calorne might be at the wedding, but it could not be he that was married to Miſs Ecklow.——The man, offended by her ſuppoſing it poſſible that he could err, rejoined, Not be he, Ma'am? why I ſtood as cloſe to him as I am to this chair, and I could not be miſtaken.—Have you, ſaid Lord Farnford, ſeen the regiſter.—Yes, replied the witneſs; but I will not ſay I minded that particularly; for we were all in a hurry then, and we have had nothing to do this morning.——This reſtored Miſs Fitzarthur's confidence, and ſhe aſked him how he could then be certain of the truth of what he had advanced.—Why Ma'am, ſaid he, I have known my Lord Calorne from a boy as high as my ſtick, and its very odd if I'm not to be truſted; it is in one of the papers this morning, and beſides, I believe I have a note in my

pocket that he ſent the day before yeſterday to the Doctor. I think the Doctor gave it me.—During the tormenting ſuſpenſe of a pocket ſcrutiny, Lord Farnford ſaid, Now, Miſs Fitzarthur, what do you ſay? incredulous ſtill?—Yes, ſhe anſwered, but I hope ſoon to be ſatisfied, for this muſt diſcover the myſtery.—The paper was now found, and his Lordſhip, watching her countenance every moment, read theſe words:

'Lord Calorne preſents his compliments 'to Dr. ————, informs him, that Miſs Ecklow 'has named nine o'clock to-morrow evening for 'the ceremony, and begs care may be taken that 'they are not needleſsly detained. They likewiſe 'join in very earneſtly requeſting, that this intended 'marriage may be kept ſecret.

'St. James's Place, Wedneſday.'

Conſtance now trembled: but recalling a confidence which ſhe now feared began to deſert her, ſhe took the paper, ſaying ſhe was certain it could not be of Lord Calorne's writing; but her eyes too ſoon convinced her, that ſhe was at leaſt in this particular, deceived: infidelity could not reject ſuch evidence, human fortitude could not withſtand the blow: all care for herſelf, all ſolicitude to conceal that ſhe yielded to the conviction, forſook her: ſhe was inſenſible to every thing but this new misfortune; and with her hands and eyes raiſed, exclaiming,—Gracious God! is it poſſible? can he have de-

deceived me? almoſt too ſuddenly for Lord Farnford to ſave her from falling on the floor, ſhe fainted.

It was ſo long before ſhe recovered, that it was matter of doubt whether any farther calamity could ever reach her; and Kitty, who had been called in, gave her over for dead; but his Lordſhip, though alarmed, ſaw this was a natural conſequence of the ſhock, and truſted, that with it his greateſt difficulty was over: he therefore beheld her return to life, not with ſurprize, but with exceſſive joy; and having diſmiſſed the ſervants, endeavoured to perſuade her from conſiderations of injury ſuffered, and prudence to be exerciſed, to reſt ſatisfied with that which was now become her lot. On this ſubject, it required the utmoſt caution to ſpeak; diſpatch was alſo neceſſary, and he tried to ſoothe her into calmneſs, while he artfully ſaid whatever could excite her indignation againſt his rival: ſhe was incapable of making any reply; ſhe was almoſt ſtupified, and ſhe knew nothing but that he on whoſe faith ſhe could have relied in the greateſt extremity, who had proved his ſincerity beyond all diſpute by the ſacrifices he had made, and to whom ſhe looked for an exemption from miſery, had unprovokedly, unaccountably, and moſt perfidiouſly deſerted her.

It did not occur to her that this deciſion was only the prelude to one ſtill more dreadful, till Lord Farnford, unable to forbear urging his own cauſe,

ſaid, with the moſt undaunted confidence, that he ſhould now claim the place in her heart which Lord Calorne had ſo juſtly forfeited. This awakened her to a remembrance of her ſituation, and to ſhun his importunity, ſhe begged ſhe might be left alone: he inſtantly quitted the room, but ſent her maid to her, whoſe preſence was no reſtraint on her grief: what cauſed it, Kitty knew not, and ſhe earneſtly entreated to be acquainted with it, aſſuring her miſtreſs that ſhe would riſque, not only Lord Farnford's anger, but her own life for her ſervice, and endeavourring to raiſe her hopes, by reminding her, that Lord Calorne muſt in a very ſhort time, releaſe her, begging her, as ſhe had hitherto ſhewn ſuch fortitude, to keep up her ſpirit, a little longer: the recollection of this expired hope, enabled her to account for the change in her, and ſhe related the too ſubſtantial cauſe of her affliction. Kitty was almoſt as ill able to bear the ſhock as her miſtreſs, yet ſhe ſtrove to conceal what ſhe felt, and hoped it was not true; but of this not a ſhadow of probability remaining, ſhe could only comfort Miſs Fitzarthur, by ſaying that Lord Calorne might ſtill come to her, for that he was not obliged becau'e he was married to leave her in a place where ſhe was in danger, and he ſurely could not be ſo cruel after ſhe had deſired to ſee him. After having, from whatever motive, ſo baſely diſappointed her, Conſtance could not ſuppoſe he had a ſpark of ſuch affection for her as would prompt him

him to this undertaking, nor could ſhe either hope or wiſh it; for, if his deſertion of her was voluntary, it would be impardonable imprudence to accept his protection when he ſo well knew her partiality for him, and, if he had been compelled to ſo villainous an act, it argued a flexibility of ſoul ſcarcely credible, and his affection for her deprived her of every ſecurity.

CHAP. XXIX.

ARGUMENT.

WHEN the violent perturbation of her mind ſubſided into ſilent grief, her maid perſuaded her to lie down on the bed, to which, more to avoid importunity than in the hope of relief, ſhe conſented, and left the parlour; but ſhe ſoon found it impoſſible to continue long in any poſture: her intellects riſing from the ſtroke that had ſtunned her, furniſhed every moment freſh ſources of

of ſorrow, and inſtead of extending her views to the conſequence of this dreadful conviction, ſhe, like her partners in affliction, recurred to the cauſe of the calamity, and bewildered herſelf in trying to diſcover from what impulſe Lord Calorne had acted: ſhe could not conceive it poſſible that he had uniformly intended to deceive her, nor imagine that the fear of Lord Ormington's reſentment had prevailed on him: what it was not, was much eaſier to decide than what it was, and ſhe was obliged to diſcontinue the purſuit.

Her next thoughts wandered to Lady Harriet, who ſhe could not ſuppoſe at all privy to her brother's intention of marrying Miſs Ecklow, and the conſideration of what ſhe would feel added to her ſufferings.

She felt herſelf infinitely more hurt at the duplicity than at the deſertion, for ſhe could have forgiven Lord Calorne, had he told her the inevitable neceſſity, if any there could be that might be called inevitable, of complying with his father's injunctions. She would with pleaſure have renounced all, excepting his friendſhip, to have procured him happineſs, and have aſked only his fraternal affection; but now war was declared between them; ſhe was excluded not only from his love, ſhe muſt ſcorn even his pity, and for her own character and ſecurity, muſt increaſe the commotion of her breaſt, by ſtruggling to conceal and to conquer a paſſion which,

which, though the offspring of whatever is deemed amiable and ineſtimable in the female heart, muſt from this moment be entirely eradicated.

That which an hour before ſhe would have choſen as her greateſt poſſible happineſs, was, by this revolution, converted into the object of her ſtrongeſt fear; and the protection ſhe ſo ardently expected from Lord Calorne, ſhe determined, even if compaſſion induced him to attempt her reſcue, to refuſe, ſince ſhe thought herſelf leſs in danger from him who avowed his deſign, than from inſidious treachery.

Lord Farnford ſent many times to inquire after her, and to beg permiſſion to ſee her, which ſhe poſitively refuſed. When dinner was ſerved up, he deſired her, with no better ſucceſs, to come down. The next meſſage was an intimation that left her without an alternative, that he would wait on her, and ſhe could not avoid his viſit, becauſe he followed the perſon he had ſent immediately; ſhe therefore told Kitty not to leave the room, and received him with averted eyes and gloomy ſilence. Looks could not repel him on whom both tears and prayers had no influence; he drew a chair by her's, apologized for having abruptly broken in upon her, and deſired her to diſmiſs her maid, as he had ſomething to ſay to her in private: ſhe made no anſwer, nor did ſhe ſeem conſcious of his being there; her boſom heaved with ſighs every moment, ſhe had loſt the relief of tears, and ſobs which convulſed her

her lungs, threatened frequently to ſtop reſpiration. Lord Farnford repeated his requeſt; but ſhe continuing ſilent; he told Kitty if her lady wanted her he would ring the bell.—I cannot go, my Lord, ſhe replied:—Miſs Fitzarthur ordered me to ſtay.——Miſs Fitzarthur is very cautious, ſaid his Lordſhip;—however I order you to go, and if you do not, Miſs Fitzarthur ſhall have one to wait on her who better underſtands her duty.—— Kitty looked earneſtly at her miſtreſs, not knowing which power ſhe was to obey; a doubt which was ſoon removed by a more forcible repetition of the command.

She retired; and the Earl, taking Conſtance's hand, ſaid to her with leſs ſenſibility than a picture of her diſtreſs would in many minds have excited; —When may I hope this exceſſive reſerve will wear off;—I cannot ſuffer you to indulge this unreaſonable ſorrow; 'tis really weakneſs.—Come, my love, be yourſelf; I am certain you will not do any thing unbecoming:——if you think rightly you will rejoice in having detected Calorne ſo ſoon:— conſider what a ſituation you muſt have been in tomorrow had I not interpoſed to ſave you:—but, my deareſt girl, why will you not ſpeak? are you determined ſtill obſtinately to perſevere in your oppoſition to me?—Surely you do not forget your promiſe! why will you leſſen the favour by performing it ſo ungraciouſly?——Indeed, my love, you would condemn any one elſe for acting in the manner

manner you do, for you prefer miſery to felicity: —only drive Calorne from your remembrance, and tell me you will truſt me, and are willing to make good your engagement, and you ſhall be convinced of the diſintereſtedneſs of my attachment to you.— I cannot imagine, were it in your power that you would marry a man who had once heſitated between you and money:—I will allow you to pity the weakneſs of his head and heart, in the fulleſt confidence that you abhor his deceit; for I am certain, partial as you are to him you are too good to palliate this flagrant crime.

Not a word had wretched Conſtance yet ſpoken; but this very *delicate* ſpecies of conſolation was ſo far beneficial to her as to reſtore her the privilege of tears: his Lordſhip, to whom any change was more agreeable than the ſtate of ſtupefaction he had found her in, with a degree of fondneſs, never ſo little diſguſting to her, becauſe never ſo little heeded by her, ſtill more warmly intreated her to accept and believe his proteſtations; and while he was guilty of an act of cruelty which all but himſelf would have ſhuddered at, he excuſed it by the exceſs of his *love* for her. After an exertion of all his eloquence, he prevailed no farther than bringing her to ſay, if miſery was to be her lot, ſhe cared little under what form it preſented itſelf.—— With this reply, which he conſidered as a declaration that ſhe would not oppoſe him, he was forced

to

to be content, and, leſt he ſhould injure his cauſe by pleading too ſtrongly, left her, ſending Kitty, whom he found at the door; to ſtay with her, and as he went out deſired that by the time he next ſaw her ſhe would be dreſt.

His viſit had again awakened her dread of him, and called her to a recollection of her ſituation. Deſpair could not make her ſubmit ſupinely, and the barbarity of his conduct increaſed her deteſtation of him; yet, as he had indiſputedly performed his part of the covenant, ſhe had no excuſe in refuſing to fulfil her promiſe, and with a reſolution ſimilar to that with which ſhe would have ſwallowed poiſon, and a ſtrong hope that in this act of compliance her heart would break, ſhe determined to marry Lord Farnford: but as ſhe wiſhed, and muſt to the laſt hour of her life wiſh that, however capable Lord Calorne was, he ſtill ſhould be ſatisfied of her conſtancy, ſhe could not think of thus renouncing him before ſhe had warned him that ſhe muſt do ſo. It would have been preſumption to ſuppoſe the Earl would comply with a requeſt to poſtpone his marriage, that ſhe might be gratified in this point, yet ſhe flattered herſelf that, by aſſuring him of her final determination in his favour, ſhe could prevail on him, in his preſence, to let her ſee Lord Calorne.

She had no expectation of ſucceſs unleſs the requeſt was perſonally made, and as ſhe was to much

much exhauſted to go down to him, even if her inclination had concurred with neceſſity, ſhe went into the dreſſing-room and ſent her maid to his Lordſhip deſiring ſhe might ſpeak with him: he promiſed inſtantaneous obedience, and, when he opened the door, Kitty retreated into the room her miſtreſs had quitted.

His countenance wore the air, of joy and triumph; he acknowledged himſelf honoured by her meſſage, and begged to know her commands: ſhe told him her acquieſcent intentions, and that the only favour ſhe would intreat was, to be permitted to inform Lord Calorne verbally, that it was he who had driven her to this extremity: that it was her wiſh weighed, not with Lord Farnford; that he ſhould be preſent during the interview, could not prevail on him; and that he would not ſuffer it, was the concluſion.

It was the hope of ſucceeding in her requeſt and a deſperate imagination, that, were it granted, Lord Calorne might be at once the witneſs of her love and her death, that had inſpired her with courage to form the reſolution in which Lord Farnford exulted: now, as the gratification annexed to it was vaniſhed, her horror at the proſpect returned, and with all the eloquence of beautiful wretchedneſs ſhe ſtrove to convince him, that to end her exiſtence would be incomparably leſs cruelty than the force he put on her: ſhe denied

denied that it could be love that actuated him, for when did love produce barbarity to the object beloved?——She ſaid it was revenge, it was a deſire of thwarting Lord Calorne, and it was pride, which would not ſuffer him to yield to another; that ſhe would willingly promiſe to remain unmarried all her life if that would ſatisfy him, that what ſhe had refuſed him ſhould never be given to any one, and that ſhe would not ſee Lord Calorne.

He laughed at her for ſuppoſing this forbearance would content him, and magnified in tenfold proportion her hatred and her contempt of him, by ſaying that, could Lord Calorne's wife and ſhe agree, he would rather ſubmit to ſhare affection with him than give her up.——Good God! what a wreteh!—exclaimed Conſtance, unawed by his hearing her:—muſt I be yoked with the vileſt of his ſpecies?—If I am he, anſwered his Lordſhip, indeed you muſt; but it is you who have made me what I am, and when you know me more intimately you will acknowledge that my conduct to you is not the effect of any principle in me: it is the neceſſity of departing from all principle:—in an extraordinary caſe extraordinary methods muſt be uſed.—But continued he, I truſt I need ſay no more to ſecure your compliance; you are mine by your promiſe, and I ſhould be a laſting monument of

of folly, were I to relinquiſh my claim to you:—you muſt give up all pretenſions to prudence if you wiſh I ſhould do ſo, ſince the innumerable tongues of ſlander would now be pointed at you, and your enemies, enraged at your eſcaping them, will not fail to aſperſe you as the only means of exculpating themſelves.——Admit for a moment that I reſign my intention and puſillanimouſly relinquiſh you; ſhould I not expoſe you to every kind of evil?—you cannot but gueſs at Calorne's deſigns, where but here would you be ſafe from him?—you could not return to Mr. Gaynham's for it is more than probable they are in the plot.—No, replied Conſtance, after ſuch kindneſs as they have ſhewn me, it is impoſſible that they ſhould betray me.—I ſuppoſe, returned the Earl, you thought it, a few hours ago, as impoſſible that Calorne ſhould deceive you, and yet you find he has, as I propheſied he would.—You ought to diſtruſt all connected with him: if ſuch engagements as his to you could not bind him, how can you place confidence in a few external acts of perhaps intereſted friendſhip?—Nothing ſhall perſuade me, ſaid ſhe, that Lady Harriet or Mr. Gaynham are privy to the affair: I am ſure they would receive and pity me:—Lord Calorne's fault is, I am convinced, want of ſteadineſs, and he would never let his ſiſter into the knowledge of this failing.

I will

I will ſuppoſe then, continued Lord Farnford, that Lady Harriet is totally ignorant of the change in her brother's ſentiments; this would not mend your ſituation: if ſhe is ſtill your friend ſhe would wiſh you to return to her, or to be frequently with her: could you reject her friendſhip? or would you, by accepting it, expoſe yourſelf to Calorne by being at his ſiſter's?---You would not require, nay, I am ſure you would not allow that ſhe ſhould refuſe to ſee him on your account; to be the occaſion of a family breach would be dreadfully irkſome to you, and, if her love for her brother ſhould ever conquer her regard for you, ſhe will hate you for it. Theſe reaſons are ſuch as a regard for your own character and ſafety oblige you to obey; prudence and the natural wiſh to maintain the good opinion of the world injoin you to conſider this houſe as your only place of ſecurity; for, if Lady Harriet appears to have played the part which I have no doubt was allotted to her, ſhe will not be backward in blaming you, and this abſence from her, will, if ſhe is ſo diſpoſed, furniſh admirable matter of juſtification, ſince, as my paſſion for you is univerſally known, ſhe will not find a belief that I have behaved to you not only with the ſtricteſt honour, but moſt ſtudious reſpect, very ſtrong to oppoſe her: I do not think you hardy enough to brave ſcandal, nor will it ever be in your power to clear yourſelf: in ſhort,

were

were I to abandon you, you would be convinced that my wiſh to indulge you had overcome my prudence, and I know nothing which would ſo inconteſtably prove my love for you feigned as my doing that which you would perſuade me to think the greateſt obligation I could confer on you. ---But you cannot believe, after I am ſo thoroughly ſatisfied that I am right in perſevering, I would act in direct oppoſition to my judgment, and, to avert from you an evil which is ideal and cannot ſubſiſt, turn you looſe to every calamity which awaits friendleſs beauty. I have yet ſaid nothing of the reaſons for my adhering to my firſt determination; I have only ſhewn you thoſe againſt my giving you up;---for in my detaining you, my love for you, the intereſt I take in whatever concerns you, all conſiderations of honour and pity, and every wiſh to promote your ſubſtantial happineſs, plead forcibly. The arguments on each ſide amount briefly to this:---If I renounce you, I expoſe you to miſery for the reſt of your life, but I gratify you in an ill-founded wiſh: if I detain you, I ſubject you to a momentary ſtruggle, but I ſecure to you every future enjoyment.---Can you then, my dear Conſtance, think ſo meanly of my love or ſo contemptuouſly of my underſtanding, as to hope I will ſo infamouſly betray you? Every re-conſideration determines me yet more fully. I intreat you to ſummon all your reaſon and fortitude to puniſh Calorne as he deſerves; and let me have the felicity

city of knowing that, though you cannot immediately detach from your mind the favourable impreſſion you have admitted of him, it is not incompatible with the acceptance of my more ardent love.

From a conviction that nothing ſhe could ſay would diſſuade Lord Farnford, ſhe had hitherto remained mute; but now, being ſtrongly urged by him to ſpeak, ſhe anſwered, that were the circumſtances of her ſituation ſuch as he had repreſented, it might perhaps be *prudent* to ſubmit to the neceſſity he had impoſed on her; but that ſhe was neither ſo expoſed nor ſo friendleſs as he pretended to believe her, that ſhe could, by retiring to her uncle's, avoid Lord Calorne, and remain in ſecurity; beſides that, Lord and Lady Reycolm would in a ſhort time return to England, and ſhe ſhould have ſufficient protection.———He interrupted her, by deſiring her to anſwer a few plain queſtions ingenuouſly, which, as this looked ſomething like a parley, and ſhe flattered herſelf implied heſitation, ſhe agreed to.——Do you believe, ſaid he, that it was always, ſince Calorne firſt addreſſed you, his intention to deceive you?—No, Conſtance replied, I cannot ſuppoſe it.———What are the motives, in your opinion, which induced him to do it now?—There can be no other than his father's authority.———Do you think he has any affection for Miſs Ecklow?—I can hardly ſuppoſe he has, yet I know not.—Do you think it is voluntarily and with his internal conſent,

that

that he has married her?—No. I hope not.---Do you believe he ever had the regard for you which he profeſſed?---From my heart I believe it.---Has his attachment to you, do you imagine, ceaſed?---I cannot tell.---Have you not reaſon to ſuppoſe, from his ſecreſy, that, notwithſtanding his marriage, he has hopes that you will not entirely reject him?---He certainly knows me too well to entertain ſuch an idea.---Is he not acquainted with your love for him?---Too well, replied Conſtance, almoſt ſpent with being ſo catechized.

One queſtion more, ſaid his Lordſhip, and I have done. Collecting, from what you have now confeſſed, that it is againſt his inclination, and in compliance with Lord Ormington's will that he has married a woman he does not love, and premiſing from his ſecreſy that there is a ſpecies of hope that he ſtill entertains, can you, when you are conſcious he is acquainted with your favourable diſpoſition towards him, imagine yourſelf ſafe from his purſuit, while you are within his reach?---Were you diſintereſted, Miſs Fitzarthur; were you to judge for another, you would ſee the rock I warn you againſt.---I ſhould be grieved that experience ſhould convince you I am right; and, if you admit my love for you ſincere, you will not wonder at my reſolution of ſhielding you even againſt your will, from ſuch perils.---I have ſaid, I flatter myſelf, much more than was neceſſary; it grows late,

and you have yet to dreſs. I will order your woman to come to you. Shall I ring?

Stay, my Lord, replied Conſtance, and hear me. ---You confeſs a great concern for my happineſs, and ſeem very fearful that I ſhould ſuffer in the opinion of the world: unleſs this is mere pretence, how can yon reconcile it in forcing me to a marriage which I abhor, and which thoſe who know my averſion to you will probably doubt? ſurely I ſhall then ſuffer in the opinion of the world!---ſuch a private marriage is ſcandalous, and would place me in the predicament I ought to ſhun:---rather, if you are not aſhamed of your violence, defer your intention for a few hours, and then openly and in the face of the world avow the injury you have done me.

My dear Madam, his Lordſhip rejoined, I have ſagacity enough to diſcern that this is laſt year's game playing over again; but I have learnt to be a little more cautious in my compliances.---Yet, if, you object to a private marriage on condition you promiſe to give me no cauſe to repent my indulgence, our wedding ſhall be even more public than if it were at church.---I told you, I believe, that I expected a large company this evening: if you will engage to behave in ſuch a manner as not to increaſe my difficulty, and to do nothing purpoſely to diſcover that what you are about is not perfectly conformable to your wiſhes, I will de-

defer reading the ſervice till the company are come in, and then they ſhall be witneſſes of our marriage: if you do not chuſe this, a friend of mine will be the only perſon to attend you, and you ſhall be immediately introduced into the drawing-room as my wife.

Seeing no poſſibility of her eſcaping if ſo few perſons were preſent, whereas amongſt more there was a chance that ſome one might prove her friend, ſhe reluctantly promiſed obedience, and it was agreed, if compulſion and ſubmiſſion may be called agreement, that the company invited ſhould be ſpectator of this ſacrifice.

CHAP. XXX.

RETRACTING.

IT being now ſeven o'clock, Lord Farnford left her to dreſs, which ſhe could no longer refuſe to do as ſhe was to make ſo public an ap-

pearance. His preſence had by irritating her prevented her thinking on any thing beſide the danger with which he menaced her: but now all her recollection returned and her fortitude forſook her: deprived of whatever is valuable, excepting the conſciouſneſs of having acted uprightly, diſtracted by the paſt, tormented by the preſent, and deſperate as to the future events of her life, ſhe ſaw no peace on this ſide the grave: wholly alienated in idea from a world which ſhe believed could afford nothing but addition to her ſorrows, ſhe was angry with herſelf for being ever deceived by the flattering proſpect which had ſurrounded her, and yet though ſhe ſaw it was madneſs to hope, her heart rebelled againſt Lord Farnford's commands, and, notwithſtanding ſhe was aware that ſhe had no place of refuge, ſhe would have given the univerſe for the means of quitting his houſe.

To prepare for a marriage while under ſuch ſerious affliction was repugnant to nature, and ſtill more ſo was it to become the wife of a man who in every view of his character, excited her hatred.--- She aſked herſelf if ſhe was not guilty of the very crime ſhe imputed to Lord Calorne: ſhe found herſelf under a neceſſity of ſubmitting to ſuperior force, might not he be ſo?---might not he ſuffer as much from the compulſion as ſhe did?---But what authority could oblige him to conceal from her his intention to obey Lord Ormington? Surely, if he had not ſome deſign in impoſing on her, he would have endeavoured to leſſen the blow! Yet perhaps he

he could not prevail on himſelf to inform her of it, and had therefore poſtponed it till the laſt minute, hoping ſhe might hear of it from ſome one elſe firſt; this was ſtrange, but not quite impoſſible; ſhe therefore, willing to excuſe him under whoſe cruelty ſhe ſuffered, concluded, that he had admiſſible reaſons for what he had done, and ſatisfied that, however unfavourable appearances, he was incapable of any thing that could give her cauſe to fear him, ſhe thought him entitled to a vindication of his conduct. How could ſhe either blame, or require him to account for his deſerting her, if ſhe, by marrying Lord Farnford, involved herſelf in the ſame ſpecies of criminality ſhe charged him with?

Without remembering the perils ſhe was expoſed to, or that ſhe was not now at liberty to think for herſelf; almoſt incapacitated from judging between right and wrong, prudent and imprudent, ſhe reſolved ſtill ſtrenuouſly to oppoſe Lord Farnford, and loſt to all ſenſe of her being in the hands of a man equally reſolute, and able to execute his threats, and whoſe rage ſhe had the utmoſt reaſon to dread, ſhe ſignified her intention in this billet, which ſhe ordered Kitty to ſend to him by one of his ſervants.

'You have artfully extorted a promiſe from me, but the circumſtances under which it was obtained, excuſe me from the performance of it.--- It is true, Lord Calorne has deceived me; but that will

will not warrant my conſenting to be the wife of another.---I have taken my laſt reſolve, from which nothing ſhall oblige me to depart: you cannot, you ſhall not, force me to marry you.---Diſmiſs me from my impriſonment; for be aſſured, I have ſtill friends who will puniſh your violence.

'C. M. F.'

In a few minutes after this note was delivered, his Lordſhip entered the room. Conſtance had expected him, and had ſummoned all her courage to receive him: ſhe was walking up and down: he ſtopped her, and ſhewing her the paper, aſked if it was her writing: his countenance expreſſed exceſſive fury, and he ſpoke in the moſt menacing tone, yet ſhe was undaunted, and replied, that it was of her writing: ſhe wondered he could doubt it.---I doubted it, he anſwered, becauſe I had too good an opinion of your underſtanding to imagine you could be the author of it, and of your principles, to believe you would ſhrink from a performance of your promiſe: but Miſs Fitzarthur, your behaviour, ſince you have been in my houſe, not only excuſes, but juſtifies whatever violence, as you are pleaſed to term it, I may be driven to offer you; your obſtinacy only makes me more firm; I deſpiſe your threats, and neither they nor your applications, ſhall meet with more regard from me than this terrific epiſtle, which a moment's reflection would have convinced you, could anſwer no other

other purpoſe than making me angry.———Saying theſe words, he tore the note into ten thouſand pieces, and ſcattered them on the floor.

She ſtill maintained her courage: ſhe took no notice either of this action or of what he had ſaid, but turned from him in ſilence: he was too much provoked to be content with this declaration of his ſentiments; he repeated it, and deſired her to mend her opinion of his underſtanding and his intrepidity, warning her that this was the laſt hour ſhe could retain her obſtinacy, and adviſing her, if ſhe wiſhed to avoid compulſion, rather to ſpend it in preparing to meet him, than in ſtrengthening herſelf to make a futile oppoſition. She returned no anſwer to his admonitions till he, not chuſing to leave her in ſuch a temper, laying hold of her arm, made her turn towards him, ſaying, with a moderate tone of voice, while he looked earneſtly in her face, How can you aſſume a character that ſo ill becomes you? will you not ſpeak? ſilence is your old reſource; but, Madam, I will not leave you till you do.———What am I to ſay? ſhe then replied: you will not let me repeat my determination, and I am reſolved not to obey your unjuſtifiable commands: my promiſe cannot equitably bind me.——Not bind you? interrupted his Lordſhip; what promiſe then is binding?——A voluntary promiſe, Conſtance rejoined; mine was extorted from me.—How unworthy this is of you! ſaid he; can you plead ſuch an exemption? ad-

mit it, and every one, with whoſe convenience or inclination it does not ſuit to perform a promiſe, may be ſheltered under the ſame excuſe: half the promiſes made, are not, ſtrictly ſpeaking, voluntary: it is not *voluntarily* that many a man binds himſelf to pay money; but its being an act he diſlikes, does not exonerate him from the payment.---For ſhame, Miſs Fitzarthur; abandon ſo weak an argument, and remember that at laſt it reſts with me to judge of the validity of your argument: I hold it good, and inſiſt on your performance of it. —All promiſes, replied Conſtance, that I have ever made, I have endeavoured religiouſly to keep; but this, as being extorted under circumſtances of terror, I do not hold myſelf bound by.---What am I to underſtand by this? ſaid he: ſurely not that you retract! I will not believe you ſo capricious: I muſt have an explicit anſwer: every minute is of importance: tell me what you mean, as that muſt govern my proceedings: what do you ſay?—That I will not be your wife, replied Conſtance, collecting all her firmneſs.---You will not, returned his Lordſhip; but you ſhall, Madam, in ſpite of all your bravery.

He then impetuouſly rang the bell, and inquired whether Mr. Metward was in the houſe: the ſervant went to ſee, and the Earl continued in the room very much perturbed. Kitty, who had been a witneſs to the ſcene, ſtood by Miſs Fitzarthur trembling with fear; but her miſtreſs encouraged her,

her, by telling her not to be alarmed, for that Lord Farnford dared not to put his threats in execution: he heard her, and with a look of inſolent contempt, ſaid, Is he ſo cowardly, do you think?---She ſaid no more: the ſervant returned with an anſwer, which gave her hopes: for Mr. Metward had been called out on buſineſs, and had left word he would be at Lord Farnford's at nine o'clock: his Lordſhip muttered, a ſilence followed, and he again rang the bell.---Order the poſt-chaiſe and four, ſaid he to the man, to be got ready as faſt as poſſible; you and one of the grooms muſt go with it armed: I muſt be at Mount Felix immediately, and you ſend the houſekeeper up to me. She came, and he ſpoke to her on the outſide of the room, holding the door ſo as that ſhe might not ſee Conſtance, at the ſame time delivering his directions, as if purpoſely that Miſs Fitzarthur might hear them, in a very audible voice: he told her he was obliged to go out of town inſtantly, without regard to his engagement for the evening, that ſhe muſt inform Lady Emma of this, and requeſt her to do the honours of the houſe, and to make an apology for him.

Returning to Conſtance, who was not yet intimidated, he ſaid,—You ſee, my obſtinate young lady, to what extremities you drive me:—I perceive you mean to be refractory: but when I have you in the country I defy you.—Why you will not ſurely, replied Conſtance, carry me into the

country? you will not run ſuch a riſque!——I will run any riſque, ſaid he, rather than be circumvented by your artifices: you ſhall go to Mount Felix, 'tis a very pretty villa I aſſure you, and there you will have leiſure to repent your folly, and I ſhall have time to conſider whether I have not done wrong making you ſuch offers, and whether, for a lady who has treated me ſo contemtuouſly, and whom I ſhall have ſo entirely in my power, a handſome maintenance may not be a fitter reward than a coronet.

This, which was avowedly an inſult on Conſtance, had the effect his Lordſhip wiſhed to produce: her firmneſs no longer continued: all her ſpirits gave way, and, ſhe beſought him to have patience.—For what purpoſe? he angrily aſked:—that you may again abuſe it? I am ſorry to ſay you are not to be truſted.—I ſee the confidence you have in thoſe you call your friends deceives you:---you ſhall be out of their reach in three hours; but remember whatever is the conſequence of your ſtubbornneſs I am not reſponſible for it. ---I offered milder terms.---The reſpect I ever entertained for you would not allow me to think of a diſſoluble connection, if I fail in my intentions, blame yourſelf, and not me.

He then turned from her, and was about to quit the room, when in the moſt ſuppliant words, ſhe begged him to hear her: he refuſed, and went nearer the door, ſaying,---I will ſend to you when the

the carriage comes. She intreated him to return, Kitty joined her; but he was inexorable and left them. She was now almoſt mad, and her companion could afford her no relief; the caſe was deſperate, and within half an hour ſhe was informed that the chaiſe was at the door, and that, if ſhe did not come down, Lord Farnford would immediately wait on her. This meſſage ſhe anſwered by a requeſt to ſee him. But he ſent word he had nothing more to ſay, and that he begged ſhe would not delay him: ſhe had no alternative, obedience was not to be avoided, and ſhe went down to the parlour, her maid following her to the foot of the ſtairs in expectation of the event.

CHAP. XXXI.

LIBERATION.

LORD Farnford was in the room adjoining that ſhe was ſhewn into, and, the door being open, ſhe ſaw him folding up a letter which

he gave to a ſervant that waited, and bid him deliver to Mr. Metward as ſoon as he came in. Conſtance, who had ſupported herſelf againſt the wainſcot, when the man was diſmiſſed went to Lord Farnford; but could not ſpeak: he did not look at her, till he had taken what appeared to be ſome bank-notes out of a writing table, and put them into his pocket-book, which having done, he turned to her, and as if they had been two indifferent people going together for an airing, ſaid,---Now Madam, I am ready to attend you.---He was then paſſing her, when ſhe begged him to have a moment's patience.———It is too late, he anſwered, you have trifled too long already.---O hear me ſhe cried,---do not force me to go with you:---I cannot go;--but I will promiſe. And who would regard your promiſe, he replied ſcornfully; you may always ſay it was extorted from you:---I have already made greater conceſſions than any man beſide in my ſituation would have done:---I have humoured your caprice and now have reaſon to repent my lenity: you cannot expect me to be any longer your dupe, come, Miſs Fitzarthur, the carriage waits,---I inſiſt on your going.---I cannot go with you, ſhe anſwered, crying moſt vehemently, I would rather agree to the terms you at firſt propoſed, on condition you will not take me out of this houſe.---You have once rejected thoſe terms, ſaid his Lordſhip, and cannot expect they ſhould be

be again offered you.---I cannot wait; you muſt and poſitively ſhall come:---if you will not walk there are ways of making you move.---Unleſs you mean to kill me, replied Conſtance, O my Lord, do not inſiſt on my going.---I do inſiſt on it, ſaid he, and will make you go.

She was now utterly unable, through her various agitations, to ſay any more, and falling on her knees, ſhe looked at him in ſilent agony: this ſoftened him: Miſs Fitzarthur, he ſaid, ſuch a poſture I cannot bear to ſee you in: you a ſuppliant who might command! Why will you oblige me, continued he, ſeating her in a chair, and wiping her eyes with the handkerchief ſhe held in her hand, to uſe ſeverity? if you knew the pain I ſuffer in ſpeaking even ungently to you, you would ſpare it me: you ſhall not be taken away, if you do not oblige me to it.---Send the carriage away, was all the reply ſhe could make. This he ſaid he could not do, till he was ſecure againſt another relapſe; and the ſervants were told to wait till they had farther orders: he then returned to her, and obtained now without difficulty, her abſolute and ſolemn promiſe, that ſhe would ſubmit peaceably, to which he made her add another, that after her marriage ſhe would not join in the reſentment her friends might ſhew, but ſhould maintain herſelf to be his wife.

As ſoon as this final ſtroke was put to her condemnation, he hurried her to dreſs, and with a reſolution

ſolution to yield, yet more heroic than her oppoſition, ſhe obeyed him, though obliged ſeveral times through faintneſs to deſiſt: the dread of his impatience made her exert herſelf; but ſhe loſt much time in doing and undoing without any reaſon: her maid could aſſiſt her very feebly, for it was only Conſtance's intreaties that ſhe would not add to her ſufferings, that ſupported her.

At a little after eight, ſhe was dreſſed, and anſwered an inquiry from Lord Farnford by ſaying, ſhe was ready; he came to fetch her; this was a trying moment, and ſhe involuntarily turned from him; but he, who could not have expected a very flattering reception, endeavoured to encourage her: he told her that he thought it better not to wait the arrival of the company, as it might be too much for her, and in this, having neither hopes nor views remaining, ſhe concurred, making little more reply than tears which, in ſpite of her, trickled ſlowly down her cheeks.

Her dejection, though it eclipſed the luſtre of her beauty, gave it new charms; ſhe looked melancholy, but compoſed, and exhibited a picture of innocence and reſignation; her dreſs, as ſhe had hitherto been in mourning, had nothing coloured in it, but was entirely white, and her hat was ornamented with beautiful feathers which drooped forward, and terminated her figure. Thus decorated, ſhe ſtood the victim of an ungovernable paſſion and a wretched example of the inſtability of human

human happineſs.---Lord Farnford offered to take her hand; ſhe drew it back, but after a moment's recollection permitted him to lead her to a room whither Kitty followed, and where there was no company: he ſaid every thing that could animate her, mixing now and then a hint of what ſhe muſt expect if ſhe was refractory; and having allowed her, what he thought ſufficient time to compoſe herſelf, he opened the door of the next room, and ſpoke to ſomebody there in a low voice: then coming back to her, he told her that, knowing her antipathy to Mr. Metward, he had employed another perſon who waited for her; and he immediately led her to the ſcene of ſacrifice, where were only the clergyman and a gentleman whom ſhe had never before ſeen.

It now required every exertion to keep her from fainting; ſhe begged to ſit down, and that Kitty might be with her, both which requeſts were complied with. Feeling her agitation grow every moment greater, and fearing irritating Lord Farnford, ſhe forced herſelf to riſe, and ſaying to herſelf, It is over--fool, you cannot be more wretched:---and to his Lordſhip,---I am ready;---he gave her to the ſtranger, from whom he was again to receive her, and the ſervice began: but when ſhe was required to repeat *I Conſtance Matilda take thee Edward*, her tongue refuſed its office, and the words were given her three times before ſhe could frame her organs to articulate them.

Till

Till ſhe heard that clauſe which declared Lord Farnford and herſelf man and wife, her endeavours to ſupport herſelf ſucceeded; but then, unable to bear the horrors of her ſituation any longer, ſhe lowly uttered,---O God Almighty!---O Lord Calorne, forgive me, and fainted in the arms of her huſband, who had, during the whole of the ceremony, watched her countenance, and was prepared for ſuch an accident: ſhe was recovered, the ſervice was concluded, and the inhuman Earl led her to the room ſhe had before been in. All common methods were now ineffectual to keep animation in her; a ſurgeon was ſent for to bleed her, which had the deſired effect, and by his direction ſhe was removed to her chamber, where ſhe was to remain perfectly quiet.

The viſitors now beginning to aſſemble, Lord Farnford was detained in the drawing-room, and contented himſelf with ſending, about once in five minutes, to inquire after her The ſurgeon left her; her cloaths were changed when ſhe was ſo nearly inſenſible as to be unconſcious of it; and ſhe was laid down on the bed.

About eleven o'clock, his Lordſhip came to her door, and begged to be allowed five minutes converſation with her; but ſhe could not conſent to ſee him, and he gave the firſt proof of conjugal affection, by ſubmitting to a refuſal, and by promiſing, if ſhe would compoſe herſelf, and try to reſt, nothing ſhould diſturb her: he ſaid he had ordered

dered the porter not to ſuffer any body to knock at the door; and deſired, if there was the leaſt noiſe, to keep her awake, that Kitty would ring, and it ſhould be ſtopped.

The houſe was ſo large, that ſhe was not at all incommoded by the gueſts; and at four o'clock, being heartily wearied with having ſat up the preceding night, and with the exceſſive fatigue of body and mind ſhe had undergone, comforted by Lord Farnford's promiſe, and ſatisfied that her maid would not for a moment leave her, the agony of ſorrow yielded to the bleſſing of human weakneſs, and ſhe fell aſleep.

In this ſtate of torpid felicity, ſhe continued about two hours, and awoke refreſhed, but totally at a loſs to recollect where ſhe was: ſhe ſeemed to have no remembrance of the tranſaction of the evening, and with a degree of chearfulneſs which rendered correcting her a very painful office, inquired where Lady Harriet was. The ſight of her maid was an anſwer to every queſtion of this ſort, and all the miſery ſhe had for ſome time forgotten, burſt on her imagination: her ſtrength was ſomewhat reſtored by her ſleep; the commotion of her ſpirits was conſiderably ſubſided; but her ſufferings were not diminiſhed: her breach of faith to Lord Calorne, her averſion to the man ſhe had married, and the proſpect of increaſing evil, all tended to deprive her of conſolation, and not even her endeavours to oppoſe Lord Calorne's baſe deſertion

of

of her, and his cruel neglect of the request she had sent him, to her former opinion of him, nor her wishes to reconcile herself to her fate, could bring her the least support or encouragement.

She was, however, now able to collect her scattered thoughts, and to consider what she should do: she wished to see Lady Harriet, whose distress she could not doubt, was very great, but she did not dare to go to her without Lord Farnford's leave, lest he should, if not detain, follow her: she therefore, before nine o'clock, sent Kitty to his valet, desiring that his Lordship might be told she wished to go immediately to Burlington-street: the answer returned was, that Lord Farnford was not up, but that he had said, she was her own mistress, had ordered her coach to be got ready; and, for the purpose of paying his respects to her before she went, would rise directly.

A gleam of pleasure darted across her mind, at hearing this manumission: and, when she was told the carriage was ready, she went down. The Earl met her at the foot of the stairs, and by his unwelcome civility, unnerved every torturing idea: he took her into the parlour, saying he would not detain her many minutes, and that he could not suffer her to go without making a personal inquiry after her health: he asked her if she had breakfasted, and hearing that she had not, insisted on her having chocolate: he was not often to be dissuaded, and she was obliged to submit to this delay, notwithstanding

ing ſhe had told him how earneſtly ſhe wiſhed to relieve Lady Harriet's anxiety as ſoon as poſſible.---She is not half ſo uneaſy about you, replied his Lordſhip, as you imagine: only mark the reception ſhe gives you, and unleſs I am very much miſtaken, ſhe will not ſhew the feelings you expect.

Her detention Conſtance ſoon found was an artifice to gain time, in order to learn what ſhe intended to do. While ſhe was drinking the chocolate, Lord Farnford queſtioned her when ſhe meant to return, and whether ſhe purpoſed calling on any body beſide Lady Harriet: ſhe ſaid ſhe ſhould go only there, but that the length of her ſtay depended on circumſtances; ſhe might come back in an hour, or ſhe might ſtay three or four.—You will dine with me, I hope, rejoined he: I ſhall have no other company, nor will I, till you are perfectly reconciled to your ſituation: and now I will perform my promiſe to reſtore you your liberty myſelf: though I part with you, as you muſt believe, moſt reluctantly, I will lead you out of the houſe.

As he handed her to the carriage, he added,—I expect to be unmercifully treated by you and Lady Harriet; but remember your power and be not too ſevere. I ſtand at preſent in a very unfavourable light, but I hope every hour will improve your opinion of me: if you are the relater of what has paſſed, you will be my accuſer and vindication, for, when the object is conſidered, what I have done can neither be wondered at nor blamed.

She

She only anſwered;---I ſincerely wiſh I had no occaſion to mention your name;---and then got into the coach, which ſhe ordered to Mr. Gaynham's.

In her way thither, every thought that could render her viſit painful roſe in her mind: this was the morning on which ſhe was to have been married to Lord Calorne, and the unmeaſurable diſtance between her preſent miſery and the peace at leaſt, which ſhe had promiſed herſelf, ſunk her to deſpair. Whatever could enhance the felicity ſhe had loſt, and the wretchedneſs ſhe was involved in, ſuggeſted itſelf to her, and no one circumſtance appeared to afford her a ray of conſolation, except the reflection that if Lord Calorne could attempt fraud, it was impoſſible ſhe could have been happy with him, and therefore it was an act of Providence to ſecure her from him: in every view of his character he was either weak or wicked; the deception might have continued for a ſhort time, but to have diſcerned his principles when ſhe could not have ſeparated herſelf from him, muſt have occaſioned ſuch grief as the elevation to which her hopes had been raiſed would have rendered to the greateſt degree pungent.

Theſe conſiderations, though they might gradudually have reconciled her to the renunciation of Lord Calorne, could not to her marriage with Lord Farnford, who, notwithſtanding he was her

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Page 11, l. 8, for *mixed* read *unmixed*, p. 25, l. 9, for *heniouſly* r. *heinouſly*, p. 28, l. 18, for *complaiſance* r. *complacence*, l. 20, for *ingeniouſly* r. *ingenuouſly*, p. 45, l. 20, for *any* r. *my*, p. 47, l. 9, for *maid* r. *mind*, p. 61, l. 6, for *was* r. *were*, p. 76, l. 4, for *woman* r. *women*, p. 81, l. 7, for *I* r. *In*, p. 92, l. 15, for *agreeable* r. *agreeably*, p. 94, l. 6, for *ingenious* r. *ingenuous*, p. 95, l. 14, for *ingeniouſly* r. *ingenuouſly*, p. 97, l. 10, dele *reaſons*, p. 105 l. 15, for *at* r. *as*, p. 113, l. 15, for *ſay* r. *ſaw*, p. 115, l. 2, for *the* r. *he*, p. 125, l. 23, for *character* r. *charge*, p. 156, l. 27, for *forbids* r. *forbid*, p. 164, l. 11, after *with* inſert *that of*, p. 171, l. 28, for *favorable* r. *favorably*, p. 175, l. 10, for *involuntary* r. *involuntarily*, l. 16, for *be* r. *he*, p. 183, l. 1, for *came* r. *time*, l. 13, after *attend* inſert *to*, p. 190, l. 10, for *of* read *in*, p. 192, l. 3, for *by* r. *in*, p. 195, l. 15, for *ſhould* r. *would*, p. 196, l. 13, for *may* r. *need*, p. 199, l. 24, dele *himſelf*, p. 205, l. 1, dele *that*, p. 208, l. 22, dele *my*, p. 214, l. 11, after *am* inſert *ſo*, p. 218, l. 15, for *have* r. *hear*, p. 229, l. 3, for *impardonable* r. *unpardonable*, p. 231, l. 2, for *ineſtimable* r. *eſtimable*, p. 234, l. 10, for *indiſputedly* r. *indiſputably*, l. 18, for *capable* r. *culpable*, p. 239, l. 15, dele *in*, p. 243, l. 13, for *ſpectator* r. *ſpectators*, p. 249, l. 13, after *and* inſert *do*, p. 258, l. 23, for *unreſerved* r. *revived*.

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her huſband, was ſtill the object of her abhorrence; and however ſtrictly her natural adherence to rectitude might enable her to diſcharge her duty towards him, ſhe foreſaw nothing could ever inſpire her with ſuch ſentiments for him as would make the performance of it eaſy, and without which her ſituation was but a ſplendid ſlavery.

END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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